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# **Descriptions of Battle in the *Wars* of Procopius**

**By**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Classics and  
Ancient History

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## Table of Contents

<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	v
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	vi
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	ix
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	1
<b>CHAPTER 1: the Life of Procopius</b>	<b>23</b>
Lifespan	23
Family and Social Background	26
Religious Views	28
East Roman Education	31
The Breadth of Procopius' Reading	34
Military Career	46
Procopius the Rhetor	47
Procopius' Literary Career	49
The Other Faces of Procopius: Philosophy and Engineering	52
<b>CHAPTER 2: How to Describe a Battle in Antiquity</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Part A: Theory of Describing Battle in Antiquity: Rhetoric, Historiography, Military</b>	
<u>Part I: Rhetoric</u>	59
<u>Part II: the Essentials of Historiography</u>	67
Battles and Historiography	73
<u>Part III: Greek Military Theory</u>	81
Homer	82
Xenophon	84
Polybius	88

<b>Part B: The Practice of Describing Battle in the Sixth Century</b>	92
<u>Part I: Religious History</u>	
Evagrius: Ecclesiastical History	92
John Malalas: the Christian Chronicle	99
<u>Part II: Secular History</u>	
Agathias: Classicizing History	106
Jordanes	114
<u>Part III: Sixth Century Military Theory</u>	120
<u>Chapter Overview</u>	124
<b>CHAPTER 3: the <i>Persian Wars</i></b>	125
<u>Part I: the Programmatic Battle and Siege</u>	126
<u>Part II: Narrative and Explanation in Procopius' Descriptions of Battle</u>	
Narrative Order	131
Rhetorical Emphasis: Procopius' Use of Numbers	133
The Exhortation	137
The Sudden Reversal	142
God, Morality, and the <i>Urbs Capta</i>	144
<u>Part III: the Excitement of Battle</u>	150
Narrative Pace	151
Foreshadowing	156
Perceptions and Access to Information	157
<u>Part IV: Greek Military Theory and Procopius</u>	158
Discipline, Confusion, and Disorder	159
The Psychology of Battle	162
The Standard	167
The Stratagem and Military Trickery	168

Winning with Numbers	169
Encirclement	170
<u>Part V: the Characterization of Belisarius and Khusro</u>	171
<u>Part VI: Context</u>	181
<u>Chapter Overview</u>	186
<b>CHAPTER 4: the <i>Vandal Wars</i></b>	187
<u>Part I: the Artful Historian and Reader Engagement</u>	188
Narrative Order	189
Focalization	191
Narrator Interventions	193
Procopius' Use of Numbers	197
Narrative Markers: Names	204
Exhortations	208
Textual Unity and Internal Referencing	213
<u>Part II: the Nature of Warfare</u>	217
Guerrilla Warfare and the Absence of Fighting	217
Morale and Discipline	219
The Standard	224
Plunder, Booty, and the Characterization of the Roman Army	226
Procopius and Military Treatises	232
<u>Part III: Characterization and Generalship</u>	239
<u>Chapter Overview</u>	246
<b>CHAPTER 5: the <i>Gothic Wars</i></b>	248
<u>Part I: Battle in the '<i>Belisariad</i>'</u>	
Horse-archery	250

Graphic Battle Scenes, and the Single Blow	256
Single Combat	262
<i>Arete</i> and Heroic Displays	265
<u>Part II: Characterization, Numbers, and Rhetoric in the ‘<i>Belisariad</i>’</u>	
Numbers and Rhetoric	269
Characterization and Rhetoric	283
<u>Part III: Generalship in the ‘<i>Belisariad</i>’</u>	294
Leading from the Front – Heroic Leadership	294
The Achilles Ethos vs. the Odysseus Ethos	297
Belisarius: Hero and General	303
<u>Chapter Overview</u>	308
<b>CHAPTER 6: Book 8</b>	309
River Hippis	310
Petra	313
Archaeopolis	318
Senogallia	325
Busta Gallorum	327
Mons Lactarius	335
<u>Chapter Overview</u>	337
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	339
<b>APPENDIX 1: Battle in Antiquity – Rhetoric and Reality</b>	344
<b>APPENDIX 2: Procopius, Belisarius, and the Roman Defeat at Callinicum</b>	348
<b>APPENDIX 3: Numbers Used in the <i>Gothic Wars</i></b>	350
<b>ABBREVIATIONS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	355

## **List of Tables**

- Appendix 3: Numbers Used in the *Gothic Wars*; pp. 349-353.

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## Abstract

Procopius of Caesarea wrote a classicizing history of the wars of Justinian, which focuses squarely on warfare in an age when his contemporaries were often directing their attention towards theological matters. Battles make up a significant portion of this history and they are the focus of this thesis, with particular attention paid to their literary construction, as well as the values, norms, and assumptions which underscore them.

Chapter one focuses on the life and social background of Procopius, addressing issues such as his literary career and education. Chapter two looks at the wider context, including the three strands of thought concerning the composition of a work of history written in Greek, namely rhetoric, historiographical theory, and Greek military theory. It looks, particularly, at the theorists' respective discussions of battle; and, the practices adopted by Procopius' contemporaries when approaching battle, whether writing an ecclesiastical history, chronicle, or classicizing history, or a military treatise.

In the next four chapters I focus on the text itself. Chapter three, on the *Persian Wars*, looks at issues such as narrative order and pace, the exhortation, and morale, discipline, and the use of stratagems. Battles in the *Vandal Wars* is the subject of chapter four, and here I look at how Procopius engages with his audience through the use of literary devices such as narrator interventions and narrative markers, as well as how he characterizes the warfare itself. In chapter five I explore the influence that Homer has had on Procopius' descriptions of battle in the *Gothic Wars*, especially the siege of Rome. The last chapter, six, skips the thematic

approach used in the previous three chapters and instead evaluates his battles on a case-by-case basis.

While Procopius' conception of battle betrays many of the hallmarks of his classical predecessors, there are unmistakable signs of the influence of his contemporary context, such as the attribution of outcomes to God. What is more, these battles, which are carefully constructed, and integrated into the wider text, showcase Procopius' skill and ingenuity as a writer, and historian. As a result, my thesis demonstrates that Procopius needs to be taken seriously as a literary, cultural, and historical source for the sixth century.

## Introduction

This thesis is a study of war and historiography in one period of late antiquity, namely the sixth century during the reign of Justinian. The particular focus of the thesis is the descriptions of battle in the *Wars* of Procopius. Although there have been a handful of studies on military matters and Procopius, and studies of warfare that have touched on Procopius, the issue of Procopius and battle remains, somewhat surprisingly, largely untouched.<sup>1</sup> This is despite the fact that the number of works devoted to Procopius has started to increase, as has the number of works devoted to Justinian and his age.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, one might conjecture that the study of late antiquity itself has come of age,<sup>3</sup> especially now that in many western universities it is recognized as an important part of the study of the ancient world, if not as a period worthy of study in its own right. Thanks to the utilization of new tools of analysis, such as the inclusion of theoretical frameworks from other disciplines, our knowledge and understanding of ancient historiography and warfare has made significant advances over the past two decades or so. A selective survey of the modern literature concerned with historiography and warfare in late antiquity will bear this out, while also highlighting the gaps that still exist, including, notably, battle, and Procopius as a military historian.

An increasing number of scholars are turning their attention to historiography in late antiquity; if we include the late antique historians under the broader category

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<sup>1</sup> There are some exceptions, which I discuss below pp 8-12.

<sup>2</sup> Though the number of studies devoted to late antiquity is nothing like those pertaining to Classical Greece and Classical Rome, particularly Classical Athens and late Republican and early Imperial Rome, I have been forced to be selective. My bibliography for this introduction contains only a sample of the requisite material.

<sup>3</sup> See the various contributions to volume 72 (1997) of *Symbolae Osloenses*, which examine the impact of Peter Brown's (1971), *the World of Late Antiquity*, on the study of the late Roman world.

of Byzantine historians the list is even greater.<sup>4</sup> There have been both general studies, and examinations of specific issues. All manners of historical writing have been approached: from the writers of ecclesiastical history, such as the works of Urbainczyk on Socrates,<sup>5</sup> and Van Nuffeln on both Socrates and Sozomen;<sup>6</sup> to the many works of Jeffreys, and her colleagues, on Malalas and the Greek chronicle,<sup>7</sup> as well as those of Croke on Marcellinus and the Latin chronicle.<sup>8</sup> There have also been studies of individuals. As regards Ammianus Marcellinus, Matthews contributed an extensive study to the fourth century historian;<sup>9</sup> Barnes wrote a monograph on his literary presentation of historical reality;<sup>10</sup> Drijvers and Hunt edited a collection of papers on various aspects of Ammianus, which, in many respects, built on the earlier work of Matthews;<sup>11</sup> Kagan studied Ammianus in tandem with Caesar in a broader look at battle narrative;<sup>12</sup> and Kelly, the most recent contribution in this selective list, has looked at intertextuality in the *Res Gestae*.<sup>13</sup> There have been studies of particular matters pertaining to the writing of history such as Marincola's look at the way that ancient historians establish their authority in their texts, which includes Ammianus Marcellinus;<sup>14</sup> Inglebert's book on the transformation of ancient knowledge in a Christian empire, of which a substantial portion is devoted

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<sup>4</sup> Ljubarskij (1993, 1998) has both edited and contributed papers on Byzantine historiography. One of the more prominent sections in a recent collection in honour of Roger Scott is devoted to historical narrative (Burke 2006). The proceedings of a conference on Byzantine historical narrative were published in the same year as the Scott volume (Odorico, Agapitos, and Hinterberger 2006). Similarly, the 2007 spring symposium of Byzantine Studies in Britain was devoted to historiography. Indeed, historiography is generally considered one of, if not the, prime contribution of the Byzantines to world literature.

<sup>5</sup> Urbainczyk 1997.

<sup>6</sup> Van Nuffelen 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Jeffreys, Croke, and Scott 1990; Jeffreys 2000, 2003..

<sup>8</sup> Croke 1990, 2001, 2003.

<sup>9</sup> Matthews 1989.

<sup>10</sup> Barnes 1998.

<sup>11</sup> Drijvers and Hunt 1999.

<sup>12</sup> Kagan 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Kelly 2008.

<sup>14</sup> Marincola 1997.

to historical writing;<sup>15</sup> Clark's insightful text on the writing of history and literary theory, which is in part devoted to historical texts;<sup>16</sup> Brodka's study of historical thought at the end of antiquity in the works of Procopius, Agathias, and Theophylact Simocatta;<sup>17</sup> and Merrills' examination of the transformation of historical and geographical thought in the works of Orosius, Jordanes, Isidore of Seville, and Bede at the dawn of the medieval world.<sup>18</sup> There have also been broader studies of a particular aspect of late antiquity such as the reign of Justinian, or, historiography in general, that have included chapters on late antique historiography. Some such examples include Heather's chapter on late antique historiography, which is included in a volume on historical writing through the ages;<sup>19</sup> Liebeschuetz's study of the late antique city which includes some discussion of historiography in both the east and west;<sup>20</sup> Mazal's chapter on historical writing in his large study of Justinian and his age;<sup>21</sup> Flusin's chapter on literary culture, which has some bearing on the historical literature;<sup>22</sup> Rapp's chapter on Justinianic literary culture, which is much like Flusin's, though with a greater focus on historiography;<sup>23</sup> there are a handful of chapters which are specifically concerned with late antique issues in Marincola's recent companion to Greek and Roman historiography.<sup>24</sup> We have also seen the publication of a handful of books, and edited volumes, devoted to late antique

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<sup>15</sup> Inglebert 2001: 289-391; 463-544.

<sup>16</sup> Clark 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Brodka 2004. Despite my focus on battles in particular, my main focus in this thesis is how Procopius orders his narrative. Brodka (2004: 62-108) has recently looked at some aspects of the *Wars* narrative structure.

<sup>18</sup> Merrills 2005.

<sup>19</sup> Heather 1997: 69-87.

<sup>20</sup> Liebeschuetz 2001: 223-248; 318-341.

<sup>21</sup> Mazal 2001: 486-501.

<sup>22</sup> Flusin 2004.

<sup>23</sup> Rapp 2005.

<sup>24</sup> Marincola 2007a. See, especially, the contributions of Banchich, "The Epitomizing Tradition in Late Antiquity"; Croke, "Late Antique Historiography, 250-650 CE"; Kelly "To Forge their Tongues to Grander Styles: Ammianus' Epilogue"; and Rohrbacher "Ammianus' Roman Digressions and the Audience of the *Res Gestae*".

historians such as the book edited by Cameron and Conrad on the late antique east;<sup>25</sup> Rohrbacher's book entitled *the Historians of Late Antiquity*, which deals primarily with fourth and fifth century historians;<sup>26</sup> the collected volume edited by Marasco, which contains papers covering a wide range of late antique historiographical issues;<sup>27</sup> and, Treadgold's overview of early Byzantine historians, which includes those writing between the third and seventh centuries.<sup>28</sup> Although many gaps still remain, the establishment of a number of standard texts as well as the publication of a host of translations has done much to open up the field; the work of Blockley is noteworthy in this regard.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, as this overview suggests, late antique historiography has been well served of late, as with many other aspects of late antiquity.

Late antique warfare has perhaps been even better served than historiography. A number of major collaborations on late antiquity that have been published over the past twenty years or so have included a chapter or two on late antique warfare. Volumes XII, XIII, and XIV of the *Cambridge Ancient History* all include chapters on warfare, with Campbell contributing a chapter on the army, and Wilkes on the provinces and frontiers in XII;<sup>30</sup> Lee discussing the army, and Blockley war and diplomacy in XIII;<sup>31</sup> and with Whitby contributing two chapters, one on the army, the other on the army and society, in XIV.<sup>32</sup> In the two respective Cambridge late antique companions there are chapters on warfare with Elton contributing to the

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<sup>25</sup> Cameron and Conrad 1992. In this book Whitby's (1992) paper on Greek historical writing is the most relevant. Cf. Whitby 1988: 311-358.

<sup>26</sup> Rohrbacher 2002.

<sup>27</sup> Marasco 2003.

<sup>28</sup> Treadgold 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Blockley has published editions with translation and commentary of the fragmentary historians of late antiquity, including Malchus, Olympiodorus, and Priscus (1981, 1983), and Menander (1985).

<sup>30</sup> Campbell 2005; Wilkes 2005.

<sup>31</sup> Blockley 1998; Lee 1998.

<sup>32</sup> Whitby 2000a; Whitby 2000b.



Constantine volume,<sup>33</sup> and Lee to the Justinian volume;<sup>34</sup> Zuckerman supplies the chapter in *Le Monde Byzantin I* edited by Morrisson;<sup>35</sup> and Whitby adds a chapter on emperor and army in Swain and Edward's *Approaching Late Antiquity*.<sup>36</sup> There have been monographs on broader themes that have included discussions on warfare in late antiquity, though the breadth of coverage has varied: Cameron in her *Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity*,<sup>37</sup> Mazal in his *Justinian I und seine Zeit*,<sup>38</sup> Halsall in his *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West*,<sup>39</sup> and Southern's 'Late Roman Army' chapter in her *the Roman Army: a Social and Institutional History*.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, we have seen the publication of a number of collections devoted specifically to warfare in late antiquity, or to military matters in general that have included chapters on late antiquity. Four collections concerned with late antique warfare are *the Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East: States, Resources and Armies*, edited by Averil Cameron;<sup>41</sup> the many varied contributions in Le Bohec and Wolff's *L'Armée Romaine de Dioclétien à Valentinien I*,<sup>42</sup> the recently published collection on the Danube region in late antiquity edited by Poulter which is largely concerned with military matters;<sup>43</sup> and the new volume edited by Lewin and Pellegrini

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<sup>33</sup> Elton 2006.

<sup>34</sup> Lee 2005.

<sup>35</sup> Zuckerman 2004.

<sup>36</sup> Whitby 2004a.

<sup>37</sup> Cameron 1993: 49-56.

<sup>38</sup> Mazal 2001: 325-331.

<sup>39</sup> Halsall 2007: 101-110.

<sup>40</sup> Southern 2007: 245-265.

<sup>41</sup> Cameron 1995. See, especially, the papers by Carrié, "L'état à la recherche de nouveaux modes de financement des armées (Rome et Byzance, IVe-VIIIe siècles)"; Howard-Johnston, "the Two Great Powers in Late Antiquity: a Comparison"; Isaac, "The Army in the Late Roman East: the Persian Wars and the Defence of the Byzantine Provinces"; Rubin, "The Reforms of Khusro Anushirwan"; and Whitby, "Recruitment in Roman Armies from Justinian to Heraclius, ca. 565-615".

<sup>42</sup> Le Bohec and Wolff 2004.

<sup>43</sup> The papers by Christie, "From the Danube to the Po: the Defence of Pannonia and Italy in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries"; Crow, "Amida and Tropaeum Traiani: a Comparison of Late Antique Fortress Cities on the Lower Danube and Mesopotamia"; Dinchev, "The Fortresses of Thrace and Dacia in the Early Byzantine Period"; Heather, "Goths in the Roman Balkans,

entitled *the Late Roman Army in the Near East from Diocletian to the Arab Conquest*.<sup>44</sup> The recent *Companion to the Roman Army* edited by Erdkamp<sup>45</sup> contains a section on late antiquity with chapters by Elton on battle,<sup>46</sup> Liebeschuetz on warlords,<sup>47</sup> Stickler on the foederati,<sup>48</sup> and Whitby on war and society;<sup>49</sup> the chapters by Caldwell, Levithan, and Whately in Bragg, Hau, and Macaulay-Lewis' *Beyond the Battlefields*;<sup>50</sup> and, notably, the chapters by Elton on the military forces,<sup>51</sup> Fear on war and society,<sup>52</sup> Humphries on international relations,<sup>53</sup> Lee on war and the state,<sup>54</sup> Rance on battle,<sup>55</sup> and Whitby on war itself<sup>56</sup> in the late antique section of volume II of *the Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare*.<sup>57</sup> Finally, a number of monographs dealing with late antique military matters have also been published. The period from Diocletian to the middle of the fifth century has been particularly well served, with books by Liebeschuetz concerned largely with the issue of barbarization at the end of fourth century into the fifth,<sup>58</sup> by Elton on the fourth and fifth centuries, again concerned, at least in part, with barbarization, but also Rome

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c. 350-500"; Johnstone, "A Short Report on the Preliminary Results from the Study of the Mammal and Bird Bone Assemblages from Dichin"; Liebeschuetz, "The Lower Danube Region under Pressure: from Valens to Heraclius"; Von Bülow, "The Fort of Iatrus in Moesia Secunda: Observations on the Late Roman Defensive System on the Lower Danube (Fourth-Sixth centuries AD)"; and Whitby, "The Late Roman Army and the Defence of the Balkans", in Poulter (2007) are most relevant.

<sup>44</sup> Lewin and Pellegrini 2007.

<sup>45</sup> Erdkamp 2007.

<sup>46</sup> Elton 2007c.

<sup>47</sup> Liebeschuetz 2007.

<sup>48</sup> Stickler 2007.

<sup>49</sup> Whitby 2007c.

<sup>50</sup> Bragg, Hau, and Macaulay-Lewis 2008. Caldwell's paper is concerned with troop loyalty during the civil wars in the fourth century Balkans, Levithan's looks at the intentional exposure of emperors and generals during sieges through Roman Imperial history, and my own paper looks at the connection between generalship and indiscipline in much of the sixth century literature concerned with military matters.

<sup>51</sup> Elton 2007a.

<sup>52</sup> Fear 2007.

<sup>53</sup> Humphries 2007.

<sup>54</sup> Lee 2007b.

<sup>55</sup> Rance 2007a.

<sup>56</sup> Whitby 2007b.

<sup>57</sup> Sabin, Van Wees and Whitby 2007b.

<sup>58</sup> Liebeschuetz 1990.

and their western foes at war;<sup>59</sup> by Southern and Dixon, ostensibly concerned with the whole of late antiquity though focusing more heavily on the fourth century and quite dependent on earlier work;<sup>60</sup> by Nicasie, which covers many of the same issues as Elton, only with more discussion of army organization;<sup>61</sup> by Richardot, covering a range of issues from frontier surveillance to logistics with a handful of case studies of individual battles;<sup>62</sup> and by Le Bohec, which, like the previous five, is concerned mostly with the west, and again covers many issues from the state of the army under specific emperors to military architecture.<sup>63</sup> Doug Lee has published a wide-ranging book that looks at the effects of war on society in late antiquity, but which also includes a look at the military infrastructure;<sup>64</sup> while Ravegnani has contributed two books on Justinianic military matters, the first focused on the soldiery and issues such as equipment and the conditions of service,<sup>65</sup> the latter with war itself from imperial defence policy to battle itself.<sup>66</sup> Greatrex contributed a detailed study of the first Persian war of the sixth century using a wide array of different sources, and, which also looked at things from the Iranian perspective; and Syväne has written a very detailed book on tactics in the last century and a half of antiquity that also includes discussion of the armies of Rome's opponents.<sup>67</sup> This dizzying survey of much of the modern literature concerned with late antique warfare gives some indication of the breadth and variety of coverage over the past two decades; however, it should also have flagged some of the gaps.

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<sup>59</sup> Elton 1996.

<sup>60</sup> Southern and Dixon 1996.

<sup>61</sup> Nicasie 1998.

<sup>62</sup> Richardot 2005.

<sup>63</sup> Le Bohec 2006.

<sup>64</sup> Lee 2007a.

<sup>65</sup> Ravegnani 1988.

<sup>66</sup> Ravegnani 2004.

<sup>67</sup> Syväne 2004.

Scholars have looked at both historiographical and military issues in their works, but less so the historiography of war. Indeed, for good reason, source criticism is a major part of most studies of warfare in late antiquity; much of this is concerned with not only the reliability of the historians used, but also their qualities as military historians. Both Greatrex and Syv anne, for example, include substantial discussions of the major historians, as well as the various other sorts of evidence, in their works.<sup>68</sup> Though dealing with a later period, Birkenmeier is illustrative in this regard, devoting as he does his first chapter of his study of the Komnenian army to the textual sources, particularly the many principal historians of the age.<sup>69</sup> The first section of the collection on the fourth century Roman army edited by Le Bohec and Wolff is based on sources, and contains an interesting chapter by Sabbah, who discussed some of the literary qualities of Ammianus' treatment of warfare in an earlier book.<sup>70</sup> There are also studies of particular military matters centred on the evidence of a single historian, though they are fewer in number, and span the course of antiquity through to the Byzantine period.<sup>71</sup> Kouroumalis' recent doctoral thesis examined Procopius' presentation of the Gothic War in detail, and it is in part an extended source criticism and commentary on Procopius' *Wars* V-VII.<sup>72</sup> Whitby's monograph on the emperor Maurice, with especial attention paid to the Balkan and Persian warfare that occupied much of the reign, is also a careful historiographical

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<sup>68</sup> Greatrex 1998: 62-67, 73-76, 168, 194-195; Syv anne 2004: 12-27.

<sup>69</sup> Birkenmeier 2002: 3-26. Those historians are namely Anna Komnena, John Zonaras, Nikephoros Bryennios, Michael Psellos, John Kinnamos, and Niketas Choniates.

<sup>70</sup> Sabbah 2004. See Sabbah 1978.

<sup>71</sup> J. W. I. Lee (2007) studies the classical Greek mercenary soldiers through a careful analysis of Xenophon's *Anabasis*, and by employing material from sociology and modern war studies. Though he is less concerned with the issues that I discuss, it is an important study nonetheless. Xenophon is also the primary source for Hutchinson's (2000) look at command in the late fifth and fourth centuries BC, pertinent because of the emphasis that Procopius places on generalship. The same can be said for Ash (1999), who looks at Tacitus' careful characterization of the rival armies, and their commanders, during the civil wars that led to the promotion of Vespasian to the purple in the *Histories*.

<sup>72</sup> I want to thank Maria for allowing me to read her thesis (Kouroumalis 2005). I discuss her work further below.

examination of Theophylact Simocatta.<sup>73</sup> Dealing with a later period of Byzantine history, Holmes' detailed study of the reign of Basil II and his foreign policy is in large measure an historiographical study of John Skylitzes.<sup>74</sup> The precedent for an historiographically based study of warfare in late antiquity does exist.

There have been a number of papers that have treated some aspect of Procopius' treatment of military matters in the sixth century.<sup>75</sup> Nearly a century ago Müller examined the Justinianic army as reported by Procopius and Agathias, focusing primarily on troop types from the so-called *katalogoi* to the private soldiers, though also looking, if briefly, at conditions.<sup>76</sup> Hannestad wrote an influential article that, much like Müller's, focused largely on the military forces as described by Procopius in the *Gothic Wars*, especially their numbers; he also discussed the change in presentation of Belisarius in the second half of this text.<sup>77</sup> The *Buildings* has attracted a lot of attention thanks to Procopius' heavy emphasis on frontiers and strategy. Brian Croke discussed the Anastasian Long Wall and argued against Procopius' claims that Anastasius had built it.<sup>78</sup> In another article, Croke, along with Crow, discuss Procopius' presentation of the fortress of Dara using it as a case study to generalize about his account of other buildings on the eastern frontier; they ultimately conclude that he tends to over-exaggerate.<sup>79</sup> These views have been challenged, however, on a number of occasions, by Michael Whitby. Whitby treats Procopius' presentation of a number of eastern frontier sites in detail. He acknowledges, for example, that the description of Martyropolis needs to be treated

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<sup>73</sup> Whitby 1988.

<sup>74</sup> Holmes 2005.

<sup>75</sup> This survey includes the majority of those papers that deal specifically with Procopius and military matters. As such, I have left out those other studies which, at some point or other, discuss military matters, if briefly, such as the monographs of Cameron, Kaldellis, and Börm.

<sup>76</sup> Müller 1912.

<sup>77</sup> Hannestad 1960.

<sup>78</sup> Croke 1982.

<sup>79</sup> Croke and Crow 1983.

with caution, but argues that it is not mere fabrication.<sup>80</sup> Whitby's sanguine view of Procopius, particularly his recognition of his value for late antique frontier and military history, is forcefully advocated in a handful of other papers, one on the defences of Upper Mesopotamia,<sup>81</sup> one on his presentation of Dara, which is a successful refutation of the arguments of Croke and Crow,<sup>82</sup> and another that looks at a number of different sites, including Edessa, Sergiopolis, and the churches of Saints Peter and Paul at Constantinople.<sup>83</sup> Many of the papers in the *Antiquité Tardive* collection devoted to the *Buildings* have some bearing on military matters.<sup>84</sup> Despite this attention on the *Buildings*, the *Wars* has not entirely been overlooked. Adshead contributed a thoughtful paper that compared Procopius' description of the siege of Rome with Thucydides' siege of Syracuse, while also discussing some aspects of his presentation of strategy, particularly as regards the Slavs.<sup>85</sup> The same year as Adshead's paper Walter Kaegi published an overview of Procopius' qualities as a military historian.<sup>86</sup> In Kaegi's eyes Procopius is the best Byzantine military historian, and over the course of his paper he looks at issues such as his attention to detail, his knowledge of earlier military history, logistics, heroism, while also remarking that "Procopius was an accomplished analyst of battles and missed opportunities".<sup>87</sup> Liebeschuetz discusses the willingness of the Italians to participate in combat, largely on the basis of the evidence of Procopius.<sup>88</sup> Pazdernik compares Procopius' presentation of Belisarius and Thucydides' of Brasidas in an intertextual analysis that

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<sup>80</sup> Whitby 1984.

<sup>81</sup> Whitby 1986a.

<sup>82</sup> Whitby 1986b.

<sup>83</sup> Whitby 1987.

<sup>84</sup> *Antiquité Tardive* 8, 2000. This special edition is entitled *Le De Aedificiis de Procope: Le Texte et les Réalités Documentaires*.

<sup>85</sup> Adshead 1990.

<sup>86</sup> Kaegi 1990.

<sup>87</sup> Kaegi 1990: 67.

<sup>88</sup> Liebeschuetz 1996.

draws on his unpublished PhD dissertation.<sup>89</sup> The paper focuses largely on the respective generals' treatment of, and interaction with, the population of the cities they aim to capture, as well as their authority. Philip Rance has recently discussed Procopius' description of the battle of Busta Gallorum and his presentation of sixth century warfare.<sup>90</sup> In this wide-ranging paper Rance is primarily concerned with reconstructing the battle, particularly as regards the tactics employed by both sides, which he endeavours to place in their sixth century context, though Procopius' sources and methodology also attract considerable attention. Maria Kouroumali has recently completed her Oxford thesis on Procopius and the *Gothic Wars*, which deals not only with stylistic and methodological issues regarding Procopius, particularly in comparison to Thucydides, but also with the war in Italy itself, and how Procopius' reconstruction matches what little we know.<sup>91</sup> Lastly, in a paper which returns to the issue of Dara, Chris Lillington-Martin reconstructs the topography of the site using a re-reading of Procopius' description from the *Wars*, as well as his own first-hand knowledge of the site.<sup>92</sup> In summation, there have been a number of important studies of various aspects of Procopius the military historian; however, major gaps still exist. Despite the significant work on the *Buildings*, and Procopius' discussion of eastern fortresses, much remains to be done regarding his construction, and understanding, of the Roman frontiers.<sup>93</sup> Procopius has much to tell us about the conduct of war in the sixth century: the supplying of goods while on campaign, a task with which he had some experience; imperial decision making, particularly

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<sup>89</sup> The article was published in 2000 while the thesis dates to 1997. More recently Pazdernik (2006) has written an article that compares aspects of Xenophon's *Hellenica* with Procopius' *Wars*, again an intertextual analysis.

<sup>90</sup> Rance 2005.

<sup>91</sup> Kouroumali 2005.

<sup>92</sup> Lillington-Martin 2007.

<sup>93</sup> The careful work of Börm (2007), Greatrex (1998; Greatrex and Lieu 2002), and Whitby (1984, 1986a, 1986b, and 1989) has gone a long way towards rectifying this for the east. The recent dissertations of Kouroumali (2005) and Sarantis (2005) have done the same for Italy and the Balkans, respectively.

apparent in the opening to the *Vandal Wars* when Justinian seeks advice on waging war in Africa, though also in the introductions to the *Persian Wars* and the *Gothic Wars*; Roman conceptions of foreign policy, including how some members of the elite conceived of the frontiers, as well as what they perceived to be the causes of war; and, the communications between the emperor and his generals during war itself. Yet, the most glaring omission might be Procopius' descriptions of combat, whether open battle or siege. Although the evidence from his works has been used to reconstruct ancient battles and warfare,<sup>94</sup> there has been no detailed treatment of his narratives themselves.

With so much still to be done regarding Procopius and warfare I need to clarify my focus on battle. For one thing, the interest in ancient battles is sufficient to warrant such a study, and in many ways Procopius makes a better object of study than most other ancient historians. In Procopius' case it is important to note that he was both an eye-witness to some of the battles that he describes, as well as their only chronicler. Furthermore, in the works referred to above, the issue of Procopius and battle has not been addressed at length. This is in marked contrast to that other major late antique historian, Ammianus Marcellinus; his descriptions of battle have attracted considerable attention.<sup>95</sup> There have been two studies devoted specifically to Ammianus' qualities as a military historian, one by Austin,<sup>96</sup> the other by Crump,<sup>97</sup> both of which treat battle. Sabbah discusses Ammianus' literary construction of

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<sup>94</sup> Rubin (1957) does discuss all the major battles in his detailed treatment of Procopius, though his commentary is more concerned with geographical and historical matters than historiographical ones. See, for example, his discussions of the battle of Dara (Rubin 1957: 367-369) and Rome (Rubin 1957: 441-450).

<sup>95</sup> The three most important historians for studying warfare in late antiquity are Ammianus Marcellinus, Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, and Procopius. While I may bemoan the lack of attention paid to Procopius, particularly when compared to Ammianus, he is much better served than the earlier Syriac historian Pseudo-Joshua, on whom little work has been done.

<sup>96</sup> Austin 1979. See especially pp 140-161.

<sup>97</sup> Crump 1975. See especially pp 69-113.



battles and sieges in his detailed monograph;<sup>98</sup> the same is true for Matthews.<sup>99</sup> Three of the chapters in the collection *the Late Roman World and Its Historian* are concerned with battle and military matters, namely those by Den Hengst,<sup>100</sup> Smith,<sup>101</sup> and Trombley.<sup>102</sup> Barnes and Kelly are more sparing in their treatment of battle and military matters.<sup>103</sup> The most detailed study, however, is Kagan's recent monograph on the battle narratives of Ammianus and Caesar.<sup>104</sup> This book carefully examines the narrative techniques employed by these two historians, and, puts them in relation to the points made by Keegan in his monumental *Face of Battle*, among other contemporary psychological and sociological theory, while also focusing on causality in these ancient descriptions.<sup>105</sup> An important thing that Kagan's book does is force us to think about the many ways that battle has been, and can be, studied, particularly in the context of interdisciplinary studies. The question that arises then is how to approach battle in Procopius' *Wars*. There are a number of ways that this could be done. First, I could adopt the approach of Syv anne and Rance and concentrate on how his battles elucidate sixth century Roman tactics; this would inevitably necessitate the use of other sources, notably Maurice, to fill the gaps that Procopius leaves.<sup>106</sup> Plus, Procopius, as we shall see, frequently puts his emphasis on a variety of factors other than tactics, such as God and morale, when explaining a battle. Second, I could attempt to recreate the course of the battles, employing various other materials, both ancient and modern. Many of the battle summaries in

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<sup>98</sup> Sabbah 1978: 572-588.

<sup>99</sup> Matthews 1989: 279-303.

<sup>100</sup> Den Hengst 1999.

<sup>101</sup> Smith 1999.

<sup>102</sup> Trombley 1999.

<sup>103</sup> Barnes 1998, Kelly 2008.

<sup>104</sup> Kagan 2006.

<sup>105</sup> Keegan 1976. Kagan (2006: 7-22) offers a provocative critique of Keegan's 'face of battle' narrative approach. Cf. Wheeler 2001.

<sup>106</sup> The best overall discussion of late Roman battle is Rance's (2007a) chapter in *the Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare*.

Syv anne’s book, for example, are heavily dependant on Procopius.<sup>107</sup> Battles are, however, notoriously complex and nonlinear events, and one observer, which – fortunately for many of the battles described – Procopius is, cannot expect to know all the central points.<sup>108</sup> Whatley long ago recognized the problems this posed; since then scholars have attempted to supplement the ancient historians in a variety of ways, many of which are carefully set out by Whitby.<sup>109</sup> Battlefield archaeology has been used with some success to recreate battles. Though less helpful with open battles for reasons such as the nature of the natural environment, the reuse of weapons and equipment, the ambiguity which exists about the location of a site, and, at least in some locations such as Adrianople, the frequency with which a particular spot has been the site of combat, the study of sieges has, at least to some degree, benefitted.<sup>110</sup> On the one hand Lillington-Martin’s work at Dara has pinpointed the precise location of the battle in 530, though it is not likely that any future study of the site will tell us any more; on the other hand James’ work at Dura has been of inestimable value for elucidating the siege of 256 which, otherwise, is little known.<sup>111</sup> More recently Sabin has applied a general model of combat, which draws on many of the techniques used in war-gaming, to a number of ancient battles. His novel model does allow the examination of a number of different scenarios for each battle, and it does allow us to view the ancient descriptions from a different perspective, though it requires further study before its value can be fully understood.<sup>112</sup> Nevertheless, whether the literary accounts are supplemented by some combination of the material evidence and modern models, more work is needed before all the

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<sup>107</sup> Haldon’s (2001) overview of Byzantine warfare is along similar lines.

<sup>108</sup> What constitutes a central point, however, is something that I discuss at length at various points in this thesis, and I shall return to this issue shortly.

<sup>109</sup> Whatley 1964; Whitby 2007a. cf. Hanson 2007.

<sup>110</sup> Keegan 1993: 70-73.

<sup>111</sup> Lee 2007a: 130-131.

<sup>112</sup> Sabin 2007.

battles can be successfully reconstructed. Third, I could use Procopius to describe sixth century battle from the much debated ‘face of battle’ approach to battle narrative, which takes its name from Keegan’s influential book.<sup>113</sup> This has been attempted, with some success, by Hanson for Classical Greek warfare,<sup>114</sup> and Goldsworthy<sup>115</sup> and Sabin<sup>116</sup> for Classical Roman warfare; such an approach has yet to be attempted for late antiquity, though some preliminary studies have been made. Syväne discusses some aspects of the ‘face of battle’ approach as far as it applies to infantry battle,<sup>117</sup> while Lenski looks at the experience of battle by focusing on two separate sieges of Amida.<sup>118</sup> This takes me back to the aforementioned study by Kagan, in which she suggests that Ammianus pioneered the ‘face of battle’ approach which is particularly clear in his descriptions of siege of Amida and the battle of Strasbourg.<sup>119</sup> Keegan’s approach, however, is not without its flaws, particularly as regards ancient combat, as a number of scholars, especially Wheeler, have pointed out.<sup>120</sup> Fourth, and finally, there is the cultural approach to the study of battle, one which claims that battle description reflects culture;<sup>121</sup> this is the one that I have adopted here in this thesis.

While introducing the topic of his thought-provoking paper “The Rhetoric of Combat”, Ted Lendon makes the following salient points:

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<sup>113</sup> Keegan 1976.

<sup>114</sup> Hanson 2000.

<sup>115</sup> Goldsworthy 1996. cf. Lee 1996; Gilliver 1999.

<sup>116</sup> Sabin 2000.

<sup>117</sup> Syväne 2004: 260-276.

<sup>118</sup> Lenski 2007. Cf. Matthews 1989: 279-303; Lee 2007a: 123-146, esp. 123-133.

<sup>119</sup> Kagan 2006: 23-95. As evidenced in her critique of Keegan’s approach (2006: 7-22), her monograph includes some quite technical discussion of military issues throughout, thanks to her professional engagement with contemporary matters. See, for example, her concluding remarks (2006: 181-200).

<sup>120</sup> Wheeler 1998, 2001, 2004a, 2004b. Cf. Wheeler 2007: 187

<sup>121</sup> Lendon 1999: 275. A shorter essay, which adopts many of the points noted here by Lendon, is McGrath’s (1995) discussion of the rhetoric of battle regarding John Sklitzes and Leo the Deacon who both describe the battles of Dorostolon in 971.

What is described in a battle description depends on unconscious cultural and conscious intellectual decisions about what it is important to describe...the way ancient authors describe the details of battle can tell us about the mental rigging of the societies in which they lived...Understanding the mechanics of battle in ancient authors also offers a corrective to traditional methods of reconstructing ancient battles...ancient authors have their own conventions with which to accord: not merely obvious large-scale stylistic models like the invented paired harangues with which some classical historians adorn their battles, but deep-seated inherited convictions about what factors were decisive in battle, what details ought to be related, and how the narrative of events should be structured...study of ancient conventions may...offer insight into ancient realities which the arrogant imposition of modern convention hides...<sup>122</sup>

These comments are fundamental to the approach that I am going to take to Procopius' descriptions. As I noted earlier, there is no scholarly consensus regarding the quality of Procopius as an historian, and although many do hold him in high regard, including, most recently, Pazdernik,<sup>123</sup> Kaldellis,<sup>124</sup> and Börm<sup>125</sup>, others have reservations.<sup>126</sup> This mixed appraisal is particularly apparent when the issue of Procopius' classicism, or, rather, classicizing tendencies, is raised. And, this is often extended to his knowledge of military matters; in particular, his descriptions of battle, which have been censured by scholars. For example, Brent Shaw, in his wide-ranging paper on war and violence in late antiquity, includes the following disparaging remarks: "most of Procopius' accounts of sieges and set battles [are] dependant on rhetorical devices and images adopted from earlier historians".<sup>127</sup> I want to suggest that views such as this betray a misunderstanding of the cultural framework that underscores Procopius' descriptions of battle. In order to properly evaluate Procopius' abilities as a military historian we must be cognizant of how he

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<sup>122</sup> Lendon 1999: 275.

<sup>123</sup> Pazdernik 2000, 2006.

<sup>124</sup> Kaldellis 2004.

<sup>125</sup> Börm 2007.

<sup>126</sup> Kouroumali (2005) is one such example.

<sup>127</sup> Shaw 1999: 133. cf. Cameron (1985: 37-39), though she acknowledges the continuity of ancient warfare, hence alluding to the acceptability of seemingly older Classical language for combat.

understands battle as Lendon states, not whether his descriptions fit our understanding. Thus, in this thesis I shall undertake a thorough examination of Procopius' descriptions of battles, which will bear in mind the cultural approach advocated by Lendon. By closely analysing all of Procopius' battle narratives I can set out his grammar of battle. Of course, it is not only a matter of looking at all of the battles on their own, but also in the context of the respective sections of the text in which they are found, whether it is the *Persian Wars*, *Vandal Wars*, *Gothic Wars*, or Book VIII, as well as in the context of the text as a whole. The importance of looking at a smaller component, such as battle in a history, in the context of the rest of the text cannot be overestimated, a point well stated by Rood in his study of narrative in Thucydides.<sup>128</sup> Scholars are now starting to appreciate the literary character of historiography,<sup>129</sup> an issue which Averil Cameron first drew our attention to as regards Procopius nearly 25 years ago.<sup>130</sup> Indeed, one of the points made by Lendon is that it is important to look at a battle description's narrative structure. Although her starting point is Virgilian battle narrative, Rossi's study, out of necessity, incorporated Greek and Latin epic narrative and historiography, as well as literary theory, particularly the textual relationship between the two genres; as such, her book makes fundamental reading for any historian tackling the literary character of ancient constructions of battle.<sup>131</sup> As a result, narrative theory,<sup>132</sup> both ancient and

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<sup>128</sup> Rood 1998. The text's unity must be borne in mind whenever evaluating an ancient text, whether fictional or factual, and in an historical text this means evaluating the body of the work in light of the objectives set out by the author in the introduction.

<sup>129</sup> Note, for example, the comments of Whitby (2007a: 57-60).

<sup>130</sup> Cameron (1985), of course, was not interested in Procopius and warfare. Cf. the work of Italian scholars such as Trisoglio (1977), Cesa (1982), and Cresci (1986).

<sup>131</sup> Rossi 2004.

<sup>132</sup> The literature on narrative theory is immense and so I am not going to provide an overview of some of the more important modern works here. A number of works have been particularly useful. Booth (1961), Genette (1983), and Bal (1997) are three standard works. Rimón-Kenan (2002) is a very readable introduction to the issue, while Schmitz (2007: 43-62) provides a concise introduction to narrative theory and classical texts, as does Dewald (2005: 1-22), whose focus is primarily Thucydides. The papers in the collection edited by De

modern, will play a part in my analysis, which will closely examine how Procopius orders his battles.<sup>133</sup> Narrative theory is a very helpful tool, but it must always be borne in mind that no text was created in a vacuum.<sup>134</sup> The *Wars* had an audience; indeed, it was fairly successful given Procopius' later addition of book VIII. As such, the values inherent in his reconstructions of sixth century battles must reflect not only those of Procopius, but also his audience, a significant segment of the east Roman elite. Some of this thesis will thus involve a comparison of Procopius' text with those of his contemporaries. In the end, this cultural analysis of Procopius' descriptions of battles in the *Wars* has the potential to tell us a lot more about both the historian and his world than it might have seemed possible.<sup>135</sup>

My dissertation is broken down into six chapters. The first provides an overview of Procopius' life. Some of the issues discussed include his possible social background; his probable education, which is, to all intents and purposes, an overview of late east Roman education practices; a look at his career, both military and literary; a discussion of his literary background, which includes some comments on his knowledge of languages other than Greek, as well as literature in general; and

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Jong, Nünlist, and Bowie (2004) are insightful and instructive. For an overview of historical narrative through the ages see Munz (1997), and on a related note, to my mind the best study of an ancient author using the tools of modern narrative theory is Rood's (1998) analysis of Thucydides. For a good critique of narratology see Laird (1999: 46-63).

<sup>133</sup> Nearly ten years ago Jakov Ljubarskij (1998), in a special section of volume 73 of *Symbolae Osloenses*, pointed out the lack of applications of modern critical and literary theory to Byzantine texts, including histories. What is more, this was despite the fact that Byzantine texts lent themselves to this sort of analysis, especially those derived from narrative theory. One claim of some narrative theorists is that "the author is dead" (essentially the author is irrelevant to the text itself). Ljubarskij felt that this notion was particularly applicable to Byzantine texts because in most cases, for all intents and purposes, the author was dead in that we know next to nothing about their background, life, and the specific context of when they were writing. Although Ljubarskij excludes Procopius from Byzantine historiography, his comments in this paper apply to most late antique texts. Cf. Haldon (1984) on the failure to utilize modern critical theory in Byzantine studies in general, and Haldon (1993) on his application of social theory to Byzantine economic matters.

<sup>134</sup> The principal problem with narrative theory is that it treats the text in isolation and considers the context irrelevant.

<sup>135</sup> Charles' (2007) recent monograph on the dating of the *Epitoma Rei Militaris* – and he is in favour of a date sometime during the reign of Valentinian III – demonstrates that Vegetius' work does much the same for the historical period in which he was writing.

a breezy mention of more contentious issues such as his religious background, and the dating of his works. Having discussed Procopius' personal background I delve into his intellectual and cultural background in chapter two. The first broad subject of enquiry is ancient theories of history, especially the proper means of constructing an historical narrative with a heavy emphasis on battle narrative; this includes a discussion of the works of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Polybius, Cicero, Plutarch, and Lucian. I shall also look briefly at rhetoric because of its close relationship with historiography, and more specifically, because the means of describing a battle is a topic that frequently appears in rhetorical handbooks. The next subject is Greek military theory, for many of the works that Procopius would have read during his education, as well as many of the works that some of the officers, whom he would have served with on campaign, might have read, would have been influenced by Greek, and to a lesser degree, Roman military theory, and so had a marked influence on Procopius' conception of battle. The third subject is Procopius' cultural background, and here I offer a select examination of the descriptions of battle found in the works of a number of Procopius' contemporaries, and near-contemporaries, including those of writers such as Agathias, Evagrius, Jordanes, and Malalas. In chapter three I turn to the text itself and I start with the *Persian Wars*. Here I discuss a number of topics: the programmatic-battle and –siege, in which I look at how the first battle and siege of the text shapes the way that the audience reads the battles and sieges that show up later; I look at such narrative features as the order of events, the rhetorical use of certain elements such as numbers, and the narrative pace; exhortations, which, while summarizing some earlier events, provide the criteria with which the reader is to evaluate the combat to follow; I look at how military theory underscores the text, particularly as regards both the importance of order in the battle-line, and psychology during combat itself; I look at some

generalship issues that arise, including Procopius' pairing of Belisarius and Khusro; and I look at the importance of the sixth century context, specifically the relationship with contemporary military thinking to the text at large. In chapter four the *Vandal Wars* becomes my focus. As the setting for this part of the *Wars* represents largely uncharted territory for Procopius and his audience I look at how the didactic purpose of the narrative shapes his descriptions here, with reference not only to the preface to the text as a whole, but also to the *Vandal Wars*; on a related note I delve further into the relationship between contemporary military thinking and Procopius' battles. More narrative features, such as narrator interventions, his use of names, and his use of numbers are discussed, as are some further ancient military theory issues such as morale and discipline. In chapter five I move to the longest section of the *Wars*, namely, the *Gothic Wars*. Many of the literary features of Procopius' text, which are particularly evident here, are discussed including: the epic quality of most of the narrative, particularly during the siege of Rome, and this includes issues such as the gory detail of the wounds described, and the single shot success that pervades this part of the engagement; the rhetorical use of numbers in the text, particularly as regards the use of large, myriad-range, figures; contextual and theoretical matters, particularly as regards the effectiveness of the horse-archers; and, the underlying discussion of generalship, particularly in regard to the dichotomy which Procopius presents between the Achilles ethos general and the Odysseus ethos general, as manifested by Totila and Belisarius respectively. In keeping with the organization of the thesis to this point, the last chapter is concerned with Book VIII. As this book marks in many ways the culmination of Procopius' descriptions of battle, this chapter is organized differently from the rest with the key battles discussed on their own rather than in regard to various issues. This allows me to probe another facet of Procopius' narrative practice, particularly the order in which he



wrote the three main parts of the text, the *Persian Wars*, *Vandal Wars*, and *Gothic Wars*. The principal question I am interested in is whether he describes the Persian theatre in the same manner he did for the *Persian Wars*, or if his presumed later practice, namely that employed in the *Gothic Wars*, colours all of the battles described in this book. With the end of this chapter the thesis draws to a close.

Although primarily concerned with one aspect of Procopius' writing, the techniques that I elucidate regarding battles have wide application to the text as a whole. This thesis is as much about Procopius' practices as an historian as it is about understanding battle in late antiquity. Scholars such as Cameron and Shaw are right to play up the rhetorical nature of Procopius' descriptions of battle, for he is, of course, a rhetorical writer; however, that does not justify their dismissals of his accounts.<sup>136</sup> The variety of the descriptions and the depth of the explanations reveal an historian very much in control of his subject, points made clear once he is evaluated by criteria appropriate to his age, an age for which history and rhetoric went hand in hand. Indeed, my study makes a considerable contribution to our understanding of the narrative practices of Procopius, and builds on the work of scholars such as Anthony Kaldellis, who illuminated the various ways in which Procopius presents fortune in the *Vandal Wars* and *Gothic Wars*.<sup>137</sup> Many late antique texts, especially the chronicles and histories, have not been subject to the sort of analysis that utilizes modern literary theory; this thesis makes an important step in that direction.<sup>138</sup> Despite the emphasis on the significance of my thesis for Procopius and late antique historiography, this is not to downplay the importance of studying battle narrative to our understanding of military history in the sixth century,

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<sup>136</sup> On the role of rhetoric in east Roman education as well as the writing of history see chapter one below pp 31-34, and chapter two below pp 59-67.

<sup>137</sup> Kaldellis 2004: 176-194.

<sup>138</sup> Although she is mostly concerned with hagiographical texts, much of what Clark (2004) advocates is appropriate to late antique historiography.

for this thesis also argues that literary texts, whether historical or poetic, can tell us much more about military matters than most scholars previously would have admitted.<sup>139</sup> The cultural history of warfare is a subject that deserves greater attention, and the literary quality of Procopius' descriptions of battle does not obviate their study; the same can be said both for other late antique authors such as Corippus and Agathias, as well as other media such as manuscript illustrations and silverware.<sup>140</sup> A few years ago Geoffrey Greatrex noted: "it is clear that a new phase in Procopian studies has opened up".<sup>141</sup> My thesis continues this trend by emphasizing further the need for sensitivity when reading the works of Procopius.

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<sup>139</sup> In a similar vein note Charles' (2007: 14-15) comments about the value of Claudian for late fourth/early fifth century military history.

<sup>140</sup> Here I am thinking about works such as the two manuscripts from the Vatican library that illustrate battle in the *Aeneid*, as well as the David plate that depicts the battle between David and Goliath from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

<sup>141</sup> Greatrex 2003: 67.

## Chapter 1: the Life of Procopius

### Lifespan

Despite close to one hundred and fifty years of Procopian scholarship,<sup>1</sup> Procopius the man remains an enigma. He tells us very little about his life in his three works, the *History of the Wars of Justinian*, the *Secret History*, and the *Buildings*,<sup>2</sup> which is not, however, unusual. Procopius was a classicizing historian following in the footsteps of Herodotus and Thucydides, neither of whom provided much personal information in their own works.<sup>3</sup> Even his later Byzantine successors, who interjected more willingly in their texts,<sup>4</sup> left some of their personal life hidden.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, there is some information that can be gleaned from perusing his works.

Procopius was born around the turn of the sixth century, and hailed from Caesarea.<sup>6</sup> The year of his death, however, is contentious, and depends to a large extent on the date accepted for the *Buildings*, and to a lesser extent, the identification of him with the prefect of Constantinople in 562. A common claim is

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<sup>1</sup> I do not discuss the history of Procopian scholarship in this thesis; for a concise overview, which includes those older works that I exclude such as those of Dahn, Haury, and Braun, see Kouroumalis (2005: 2-4), and Börm (2007: 18-22).

<sup>2</sup> The *History of the Wars of Justinian* is in eight books. The first two books are also known as the *Persian Wars*, the second two as the *Vandal Wars*, the next three as the *Gothic Wars*, while the last book covers all fronts. Hereafter I shall refer to this work simply as the *Wars*, although on occasion for the sake of clarity, I shall refer to the individual wars while keeping the continuous sequence of books (books one and two of the *Persian Wars* are books one and two of the *Wars*, books three and four of the *Vandal Wars* are books three and four of the *Wars*, and books five to seven of the *Gothic Wars* are books five to seven of the *Wars*, with book eight covering the events on all fronts).

<sup>3</sup> Greatrex 1996: 125; Howard-Johnston 2000: 19.

<sup>4</sup> Some students of Byzantine historiography (Roger Scott for example) have argued that one of its distinctive features, particularly in relation to its classical predecessors, was the personal interest in, and their relation to, the topics chosen by the historians themselves. Anna Komnene, for example, made her father the focus of her *Alexiad*. See Scott (1981: 63-64), Ljubarskij (1991), and Talbot and Sullivan (2005: 28-31).

<sup>5</sup> The background of Leo the Deacon, the tenth century historian, for example, comes entirely from what references he makes to his life in his *History*. Cf. Talbot and Sullivan 2005: 9-10.

<sup>6</sup> Procop. *SH*. 11.24.

that much of his work does not seem to be fully polished, a factor which some argue points towards his premature death. The primary possibilities, then, are that he passed away in around 554 or 560.<sup>7</sup> Book seven of the *Wars* ends before the cessation of hostilities; the same is true for the later addition, book eight, which ends at the close of the campaigning season of 552. The *Buildings* has large lists, the presence of which may suggest that Procopius had not fully incorporated his research into his writing, the implication being that he stopped writing.<sup>8</sup> Howard-Johnston suggests that his health had been failing and that he left two comments that imply this - one at the beginning and the other at the end - in the *Secret History*.<sup>9</sup> However, instead of alluding to Procopius' imminent death, these comments from the *Secret History* suggest that Procopius expected Justinian to pass away in the not-too-distant future, as Greatrex argues.<sup>10</sup> It could very well be that in the process of his work on the *Secret History*, and in particular, that last bit, Procopius learned something that suggested that Justinian's death might be forthcoming, and so stopped work and added that sentence.<sup>11</sup> There is another clue from the preface of the *Secret History*, where Procopius says, "thus so much of what happened to befall the Romans in the wars up to this time has been described in full by me".<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> I provide a brief account of the dates of his works below. Rubin (1957: 300-301) and Brodka (2004: 15) leave the question unanswered. Those who suggest an earlier date include Cameron (1985: 12), Howard-Johnston (2000: 20-21), Kouroumali (2005: 21), the authors of the *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* (Martindale 1992: 1065), and Treadgold (2007: 191); those who prefer a later date include Börm (2007: 50-52), Evans (1972: 44-45), Hunger (1978: 293), and Signes Codoñer (2000: 16-20; 2003: 53-58).

<sup>8</sup> Whitby 1988: 73-74.

<sup>9</sup> See Procop. *SH*. 1.5, "For the men of the present being the most knowledgeable witnesses of events will be trustworthy in conveying to the future their belief in my good faith in presenting what really happened"; 30.34, "Thus when Justinian either if he is a man and leaves this life, or as the Lord of the devils lays aside his life, all those who happen to survive to that time will know the truth."

<sup>10</sup> Greatrex 2000: 218-219.

<sup>11</sup> Likewise, if anything, those two comments demonstrate Procopius' fear of a harsh reprisal if the *Secret History* was ever discovered by the Roman emperor.

<sup>12</sup> Procop. *SH*. 1.1. For the attractive hypothesis that Procopius had not originally planned two separate works, that is both the *Wars* and the *Secret History*, see Greatrex 2000

Procopius may very well have planned on completing his opus with the *Secret History* integrated into the first seven books of the *Wars*. If this is the case, the alleged references to Procopius' impending death seem rather spurious.

What about the seeming incompleteness of his works? The organization of the *Buildings* could be the result of a personal choice: Procopius chose to describe certain things in greater details than others. It could be that his health failed while he was composing it and thus decided to bring matters to some sort of conclusion. Finally, it could also be, particularly if Procopius lost his enthusiasm, that well into his work he decided to give up, and thus, somewhat hastily, finished the *Buildings*. As regards the *Wars*, I argue over the course of this thesis that the work is an integrated composition, in which Procopius carefully constructs his narrative around the themes and contexts of his work. The ends of books VII and VIII are suitable points to end the text, with events, conceivably, drawing to a close. What of the association of Procopius the historian with Procopius the prefect of Constantinople in 562? John of Nikiu, who was writing late in the seventh century, says that he was a patrician and prefect, whose work was well known.<sup>13</sup> Malalas describes the arrest of Belisarius by the city prefect Procopius,<sup>14</sup> while Theophanes describes that same prefect's dismissal.<sup>15</sup> The tenth century Suda says that our historian was *illustris*.<sup>16</sup> Taken together, there does seem to be some basis for this association: the authors of the *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* and Börm accept the possibility, before ultimately rejecting it, while Signes Codoñer is more positive about its plausibility.<sup>17</sup> Yet, John of Nikiu is quite removed in time and space, while the name Procopius was

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(*passim*). The fact that the *Secret History* opens with οὐδὲν suggests that Procopius is here continuing from an earlier narrative.

<sup>13</sup> Joh. Nik. 92.20.

<sup>14</sup> Malalas 18.141.

<sup>15</sup> Theoph. *Chron.* AM 6065.

<sup>16</sup> Suda π 2479. cf. Martindale 1992: 1062; Treadgold 2007: 190n, n. 84.

<sup>17</sup> Martindale 1992: 1066; Börm 2007: 48-49, 51; Signes Codoñer 2000: 17-20.

fairly common. Thus, it is best to leave this possibility in the realm of conjecture, though this does not disprove a date in 560 or later for Procopius' death. Since I prefer a later date for the *Buildings*, as well as the *Secret History*, I suggest that Procopius passed away some time after 560.

### **Family and Social Background**

Like much else his family history is obscure. His parents are unknown, and despite one vague reference to "the most intimate of my kinsmen", he tells us nothing about the rest of his family members.<sup>18</sup> One possibility is that Procopius' father was a certain Procopius of Edessa, a governor of Palestine, who held this post around the time of Procopius of Caesarea's birth.<sup>19</sup> Another possibility is that he was a certain Stephanus, who lived in Caesarea, was governor of Palestina Prima, and who rose to the rank of *spectabilis*, before passing away around 555.<sup>20</sup> The quantity of the evidence in both cases, however, is sparse. There is no information that could allow us to speculate about the identity of Procopius' mother, any siblings, or whether he had a family of his own with a wife and children.

What was Procopius' social class?<sup>21</sup> The fact that Procopius had the wherewithal to compose three literary works that were written in Attic Greek means

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<sup>18</sup> Procop. *SH*. 1.2.

<sup>19</sup> Evans 1972: 30; Procop. *Build*. 4.7.14.

<sup>20</sup> Greatrex 1996.

<sup>21</sup> Procopius sympathizes with many different groups. Samaritans, Hellenes, astrologers, senators, teachers, physicians, soldiers, merchants, and rhetors are the groups that Procopius defends in his *Secret History*. Thus we should be cautious about identifying his class on the basis of any sympathetic remarks. Regardless of this seemingly widespread concern, I would not go so far as to call him "the conscience of his age (Kaldellis 2004: 92), and suggest that he was not "a Roman chauvinist (Kaldellis 2004: 92)". See Brubaker (2004, 2005) for an overview of women in the mid-sixth century, and some discussion of Procopius' views of women.

that his parents had the means to give him a traditional classical education.<sup>22</sup> We know that Procopius was a provincial, or at least had provincial origins; in fact, Rapp has suggested that most of the authors writing in the sixth century came from provincial families of some wealth.<sup>23</sup> There are several passages from the *Secret History* that hint that he had both property and wealth.<sup>24</sup> In chapter eleven, Procopius claims that Justinian plundered “a majority of the homes of prosperous men.”<sup>25</sup> He makes several more similar pronouncements including complaints about the exaction of heavy taxes on landowners, and granted the attention that he gives to Justinian’s plundering of property, it seems that Procopius himself was affected.<sup>26</sup> Sarris has recently commented on those and other similar remarks, and stated, quite rightly, that he was a member of the land-owning elite, and possibly a senator.<sup>27</sup> Kaldellis provocatively claims that attempts to pin down his social class are problematic, and instead avoids doing as much; the most he is willing to concede is that he was a Platonist, and that “Procopius’ allegiances in this case were philosophical, not social”.<sup>28</sup> Howard-Johnston has recently suggested that

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<sup>22</sup> This education, which we shall return to below, stretched back to the Hellenistic period with only minimal changes. See Marrou 1956 for an older, though still useful, overview of both Greek and Roman education.

<sup>23</sup> Rapp 2005: 381-382. Cf. Cameron 1985: 6.

<sup>24</sup> And by proxy, so did his parents.

<sup>25</sup> Procop. *SH.* 11.3.

<sup>26</sup> Procop. *SH.* 11.40, “the wealth of those who seem to be prosperous in Byzantium and each city after the members of the senate, was seized and plundered”; 12.12, “but when this [Nika] happened...they began to confiscate all at once the estates of nearly all the members of the Senate”; 13.22, “for he even believed that to take away the property of his subjects by small thefts”; 19.12, in regard to members of the senate, “he had stolen the property of no small number of them”; 19.17, “in plundering the property of all men”; 23.19, “These assessments were paid by the owners of the lands”; 26.3, “he had taken away all the properties of the Senators and of the others who were considered prosperous”. This is only a sampling and Greatrex (2000: 215-228) is certainly right to argue that Procopius was not a senator.

<sup>27</sup> Sarris 2006: 5-7, esp. 6. Cf. Cameron 1985: 144-145, 227-228; Greatrex 2000: 227; Börm 2007: 45-46.

<sup>28</sup> Kaldellis 2004: 47.

Procopius' family "belonged to the commercial stratum".<sup>29</sup> He based this possibility on Procopius' visit to Syracuse in 533 where he ran into an old friend, who happened to be a merchant. This theory may explain Procopius' fascination with economic matters in the *Secret History* and elsewhere, something uncommon in ancient literature.<sup>30</sup> Regardless, whether through membership of the political, or, perhaps more likely, commercial elite, there can be little doubt that Procopius was a landowner of considerable means.<sup>31</sup>

### Religious Views

Procopius', and many of his peers', religious proclivities have come under scrutiny and what had seemed to have been firmly established, namely, his Christianity, has been challenged.<sup>32</sup> Anthony Kaldellis has disputed this

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<sup>29</sup> Howard-Johnston 2000: 23. If this view is right, then that would preclude the inclusion of Procopius' family within the local political elite.

<sup>30</sup> See for example Procop. *SH*. 25.11-26, where he discusses small coinage and Justinian's monopoly of several different types of merchandise, including silk; Procop. *Wars* 8.17.1-8, where he includes the curious anecdote about the introduction of silk production into the Roman empire; Procop. *Wars* 8.22.9-16, where he discusses the construction of Aeneas' ship; and more generally, the proclivity for Procopius to be assigned, when on campaign, to the collection of supplies, that is logistics. Michael Whitby (pers. comm.) has suggested that as a result of the thriving Gaza wine industry, landowners (such as Procopius) may have known local merchants, hence Procopius' relation to the fellow in Italy. Indeed, amphorae from Gaza wine has been found in the eastern and western Mediterranean; in the fifth and sixth centuries Gaza and its hinterland were quite prosperous (Ward-Perkins 2000: 374; Cf. McCormick 2001: 35-37; Gregory of Tours *Hist.* 7.29, 348.6-12).

<sup>31</sup> If Procopius came from the merchant class, this may explain the trouble that scholars have had in identifying his parents. Using trade as a primary source of income was still frowned upon by the Late Roman elite. Procopius' ambitious parents may have sought to raise their son above their own social background by giving him a classical education. His parents' money, and his talents, then allowed him to become Belisarius' *assessor*. Kaldellis (2004: 47) has said that although Procopius has complained about the measures taken against landowners, that need not make him a spokesman for that group. Procopius does complain more about the problems of some groups than others (and another notable group is the soldiers), and those are likely the groups with which he was best acquainted. Peasants, women, small-scale landowners, the clergy, philosophers, some religious groups (Jews, other Christian sects), and barbarians among others are not given voice by Procopius. Thus, while Procopius might not have been the spokesman, per se, for the larger landowners, that need not mean that he was not a member of that group.

<sup>32</sup> This consensus was reached as a result of the publication of Cameron's (1985) monumental study of Procopius. Cf. Meier (2004), who suggests that the natural disasters of



assumption.<sup>33</sup> Kaldellis believes that in general Procopius' cultural views were rooted in the Classics, that he was a member of an educated subculture hostile to Justinian, and following from that, he was not a Christian. What is more, Kaldellis also holds to the view that Procopius says nothing in the *Wars* about God that is explicitly Christian.<sup>34</sup> While Kaldellis should be commended for questioning many of the assumptions about Procopius, arguing that he was not a Christian is problematic. This is not the place to discuss Procopius' religious views in depth though I will provide a brief overview. As a work of classicizing history, the *Wars* was never going to abound in treatments of Christian matters. On the other hand Procopius, as the product of an author writing in a Christian age, unsurprisingly, discusses some Christian issues at various points.<sup>35</sup> For example, Procopius does seem to be well aware of Christian doctrine and practices, such as Easter, as demonstrated in the context of an assault by the Persian forces.<sup>36</sup> He also knows full well who Christ was, and despite his attempts to write as an unbiased observer, he accepts the standard interpretation of the details and significance of Christ's crucifixion.<sup>37</sup> There are other places where he demonstrates his knowledge of Christianity; this is

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the period directed Procopius' attention towards God, and Brodka (2004: 21-56), who accepts Procopius' Christianity, and whose book was published the same year as Kaldellis'.

<sup>33</sup> Kaldellis 2004. Kaldellis also believes that two of Procopius' contemporaries, Agathias and John Lydus, were also non-Christians. Although I am not convinced that Procopius was a non-Christian, I do think that a case can be made that John Lydus was not a Christian, as there seem to be fewer traces of Christianity in his work (Kaldellis 2003b). Sarris (2006: 221) is sympathetic to Kaldellis' claims.

<sup>34</sup> Kaldellis 2004: 171.

<sup>35</sup> I do concede that Procopius does not seem to have been a typical Christian, and may in fact have been a sceptic. For example, Procopius' discussion of the incident with the door at the Temple of Janus in Rome is peculiar (*Wars* 5.25.18-25), and may suggest that he sympathized with non-Christians. Moreover, his comments about doctrinal disputes also suggest some scepticism (*Wars* 5.3.5-9). Yet, one could argue that in the latter case that this was simply because Procopius was here writing a work of classicizing history, and as such, that sort of discussion would fall outside of the long-standing parameters of the genre. Still, the fact remains that he felt the need to at least mention the doctrinal disputes, which is interesting in itself. For a detailed treatment of Procopius' religiosity see Michael Whitby's (2007d) forceful rebuttal of Kaldellis' arguments.

<sup>36</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.15-16.

<sup>37</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.11.14.

particularly evident when he was in Italy, and more specifically Rome, during the Gothic wars.<sup>38</sup> Perhaps the best example, however, comes from the Persian wars. While narrating the story of Abgar of Edessa and Augustus Procopius says the following:

Around that time Jesus the son of God was in the body moving among the men in Palestine, *showing quite clearly that since he never sinned at all, and that he even performed impossible deeds that he was the Son of God in very truth*; for having called the dead he raised them up just as if they were sleeping and opened the eyes of men who had been born blind, and cleansed those whose whole bodies were suffering from leprosy and released those whose feet were maimed, and he cured all other diseases which are called by the physicians incurable.<sup>39</sup>

That statement, and others like it, casts doubt on any argument that he was a non-Christian; he seems to have included this episode as a point of reference for those Christian readers who may not have been familiar with the story of Abgar. What is more, the fact that he felt it necessary to prove that Jesus was the son of God, even though it was irrelevant to Abgar's request, suggests that he may have doubted the faith of some of his readers and so sought to include, what was for him, irrefutable proof.<sup>40</sup> There are other examples that point towards Procopius' Christianity, such as his explanations of the outcomes of certain battles.<sup>41</sup> Though he may not explain all that he describes in terms of the actions of an omnipotent Christian deity, that need not raise questions about his faith. As Whitby has stressed, we should avoid measuring Procopius – and any other late antique author for that matter – against any monolithic standard of Christianity, for there was certainly a great deal of

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. Procop. *Wars* 5.19.4. Admittedly, one need not be a Christian to know about Christianity.

<sup>39</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.12.22. My italics.

<sup>40</sup> It may also hint that some of his readers would not have been Christians, and perhaps that there were more of them than scholars have previously believed. In this regard Kaldellis is certainly right to cast doubt on the existence of a monolithic Christian society.

<sup>41</sup> See my discussion of the siege of Antioch below pp 144-150.

variety.<sup>42</sup> With this in mind I hold that Procopius was a Christian, though one with views that at times diverged from those of his peers.

### **East Roman Education**

Though he was a sixth century Christian, Procopius' education would have been broadly similar to that of generations of his ancestors.<sup>43</sup> From the Hellenistic age through Late Antiquity, although there was considerable variety in the organization of the schools, there was relative uniformity in the content of the education available to those who had the means to afford it.<sup>44</sup> The upper tier education had three fairly distinct levels: primary generally under the *grammatistes*,<sup>45</sup> secondary under the grammarian (*grammatikos*),<sup>46</sup> and higher under the teacher of rhetoric.<sup>47</sup> Primary education, which started at the age of six or seven, involved endless memorization and repetition of the alphabet, and included writing,

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<sup>42</sup> Whitby 2007d.

<sup>43</sup> The central figure in ancient education was the teacher, and it is probably better to speak of a teacher rather than a school, for the two were often coterminous. This is not to say that buildings that we would call a school did not exist, but rather that the location was more often dependent on the teacher himself. It is better to divide the educational practice into stages rather than schools (primary, secondary, tertiary). Cf. Criboire 2001.

<sup>44</sup> East Roman education is fairly well-known and has been discussed by a number of authors, such as Marrou (1956), Mango (1980), Wilson (1983), Browning (1997, 2000), Criboire (2001, esp 160-244), Kouroumali (2005: 79-106), Cameron (2006: 133-162), and Watts (2006: 1-23). Scholars are in agreement about most points, and so this brief overview is based on that consensus. Although other members of the elite would have had a similar education to Procopius', those from other ranks, would have had a different education. There seems to have been something of a two-tier education system.

<sup>45</sup> It should be noted that the term *grammatistes* is fairly vague, and that it was not used in Egypt (Criboire 2001: 51).

<sup>46</sup> The second level was more uniform in its structure than the primary.

<sup>47</sup> Although the teachers of rhetoric generally kept to the tertiary level, grammarians could, and sometimes did, instruct pupils at the primary level.

counting, and some reading aloud.<sup>48</sup> It was at this stage that a student acquired basic literacy in Greek.<sup>49</sup>

Secondary education began at the age of nine or ten, and this second stage is better attested than the first. It was at this stage that the pupils really got exposed to the Greek texts. There was a standard group of authors studied at this level, and while there was some variation among grammarians as to which other authors could be added to the basic reading list, secondary education retained its homogeneity across the empire. Those four standard authors were Homer, and in particular the *Iliad*, Euripides, Menander, and Demosthenes.<sup>50</sup> Poetry, and in particular Homer, dominated all of the rest, and it is he who is best represented among the Egyptian papyri.<sup>51</sup> The other authors who may also have been studied – though how much is debatable - include Aeschylus, Callimachus, Hesiod, Isocrates, Pindar, Plato, Sophocles, and Thucydides. There were four basic steps to the study of these authors: *diorthosis*, which was correction, and here the student would make sure that his text matched his master's; *anagnorisis*, which was reading aloud and involved proper intonation; *exegesis*, which was explanation, and here the text was explained geographically, historically, linguistically, and mythologically; and *krisis*, which was criticism, and here various moral lessons would be expounded.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> The ages that I give should not be considered standard, for in many cases a student's education was adapted to suit his (and sometimes her) abilities and needs. Thus, primary education could start earlier than six or later than seven depending on the context. The same applies to the other two educational stages.

<sup>49</sup> While slandering Justinian's background Procopius says that "as for Greek however he had never gone to an elementary teacher [γραμματιστοῦ], nor was he able to speak Greek itself in conversation (Procop. *SH*. 20.17)". Cf. Procop. *Wars* 8.19.8: "and they neither have any elementary teachers [γραμματιστήν] nor do the children among them toil over their letters [γράμματα] at all as they grow up".

<sup>50</sup> Over time, however, Aristophanes came to replace Menander.

<sup>51</sup> Wilson 1983: 19.

<sup>52</sup> Mango 1980: 125.

Next we come to higher education, and in particular, the teaching of rhetoric.<sup>53</sup> This stage would begin when the student reached the age of fourteen or fifteen. The students would learn, by heart, a number of model texts covering a variety of different genres. These genres would be explicated by their teacher. Following this the student would study some sort of rhetorical handbook, such as any one of the four treatises of Hermogenes of Tarsus.<sup>54</sup> Finally, the student would be required to compose and deliver their own speeches based on general moral or political topics.<sup>55</sup> This level was the most demanding of the lot, with those students who completed their rhetorical education taking anywhere from six to ten years to do so.<sup>56</sup>

One of the fundamental features of this training was the dominance of Attic Greek. This was not the Greek spoken on the streets of Constantinople, but rather the Greek perhaps spoken, and certainly written, during the classical period of ancient Athens in the fifth century BC. The continued dominance of the literary form of the language was largely due to the writers of the second Sophistic, which took hold in the second century AD during the High Empire. The practitioners of Atticism were interested in the style and language of the authors of classical Athens.<sup>57</sup> In the words of Swain, "Atticizing Greek was about the repristination of linguistic features, phonological, morphological, or syntactical, that were becoming or had become obsolete."<sup>58</sup> By late antiquity, there were a large number of lexicographical guides

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<sup>53</sup> There were other disciplines that were taught, like medicine, philosophy, and architecture/engineering (which I shall have more to say about below). I discuss rhetoric in greater detail in chapter two below pp 59-67.

<sup>54</sup> Those four treatises of Pseudo-Hermogenes, who lived c. 160-225, were the *Peri staseon*, the *Peri ideon*, the *Peri heurseos*, and the *Peri methodon deinotetos*.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. the insightful discussion of Gibson 2004.

<sup>56</sup> Criboire 2001: 56.

<sup>57</sup> For a detailed discussion of the origins and place of Atticism in the Second Sophistic see Swain (1996, esp. 17-64).

<sup>58</sup> Swain 1996: 34-35. Cf. Marrou (1956: 201), who says that they were "less concerned to recreate the style and taste of the great Athenian writers than to get back to the vocabulary,

available to the aspiring writer.<sup>59</sup> One such example was the anthology of John Stobaeus, who was probably writing in the fifth century, which included excerpts from various poets and prose-writers from Homer to Themistius listed under a variety of different headings.<sup>60</sup> Such anthologies, however, have brought into question the degree to which early Byzantine writers really were familiar with their ancient predecessors, whom they often quote. Some scholars have suggested – and it is an item of current debate – that in many instances the mimesis was superficial, though this was not uniformly the case.<sup>61</sup> Whether or not that was the case with Procopius is an issue to which we shall now turn.

### **The Breadth of Procopius' Reading<sup>62</sup>**

In this section I turn to Procopius' engagement with other Greek texts, from brief references to more complex intertextual interactions. In all three works, Procopius refers to a number of different authors by name, and in some cases, refers to specific lines from a classical author's work. Before I begin I need to make a few points. The naming of an author in a text is not proof that the writer had read the work of that author. At the same time the reference to any historical person or event need not mean that the writer had read a work that described said person or event. Yet, Procopius wrote three works in a language that had not been spoken for close to 1000 years, and in a world where only those with the sufficient education, and

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morphology, and the syntax of the classical language as it had existed in a 'pure' state in the past"

<sup>59</sup> Wilson 1983: 5.

<sup>60</sup> Edwards and Browning 1996: 1445.

<sup>61</sup> See Marrou (1956: 201), Jenkins (1963), Mango (1975; 1980: 243, which is specifically about Procopius), and Wilson (1983: 5) for the alleged superficiality of many Byzantine authors.

<sup>62</sup> The following discussion is an overview, and is not meant to be comprehensive. I will not be discussing his awareness of more recent texts, and in particular authors like Eustathius and Priscus. For those authors and their relationship to the works of Procopius, see Haury (2001: vii-ix), and Blockley (1981: 115-116).

ability, could afford to so. As such, it is highly unlikely that his references to classical authors, persons, and events were drawn from some sort of compendium of knowledge, despite their existence and possible popularity.<sup>63</sup> Thus, there is every reason to believe that Procopius had some knowledge of those authors and works that he refers to. Poets and playwrights are two groups particularly well represented in Procopius' works, and Homer, unsurprisingly, more so than anyone else. Many of the Homeric references from the *Wars* are found in the *Gothic Wars* where they act as sign posts, alerting the reader to not only the grandeur of the events about to be described, but also the epic flavour that colours the siege of Rome.<sup>64</sup> In the preface, Procopius makes his famous comparison between the Homeric bowmen and contemporary Byzantine bowmen.<sup>65</sup> On four occasions he explicitly names Homer.<sup>66</sup> Belisarius crosses from Messana to Rhegium in the *Gothic Wars* and Procopius claims that the poets associate the strait with the home of Scylla and Charybdis.<sup>67</sup> There is a quote in the *Secret History*, "a twin bane of mortals (βροτολοιγῶν)", that was taken from Homer.<sup>68</sup> More than halfway through the *Buildings*, Procopius says that the poets call Mysia (Moesia) the land of hand-to-hand fighters, and here he is likely referring to Homer.<sup>69</sup> Early in the *Buildings* there is a reference to the autumn star Sirius also found at the beginning of book five of Homer's *Iliad*.<sup>70</sup> There are

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<sup>63</sup> One such writer of these sorts of works, and contemporary of Procopius, is Hesychius, and his *Register of Famous Men in Scholarship*. Other works include that of John Stobaeus and the Suda. On Hesychius see Kaldellis (2005) and Treadgold (2007: 270-278). On the Suda see the recent discussion of Baldwin (2006).

<sup>64</sup> I discuss this in greater depth below in chapter five pp 255-268.

<sup>65</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.1.6-17; Hom. *Il.* 11.38.5. For a discussion of the passage's significance see below pp 249-255.

<sup>66</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.11.2, 5.11.4, 8.22.19; Procop. *Build.* 1.1.15; Hom. *Od.* 2.47, 15.152.

<sup>67</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.8.1. Procopius says something similar later in the *Wars*: "whence the poets say Scylla came" (*Wars* 7.27.17). The reference to Scylla and Charybdis suggests that Procopius is referring to Homer and the *Odyssey*.

<sup>68</sup> Procop. *SH.* 12.14; Hom. *Il.* 5.31, βροτολοιγῶν. Cf. Signes Codoñer (2000: 105-112) for a brief discussion of the *Secret History* and classical mimesis.

<sup>69</sup> Procop. *Build.* 4.7.3; Hom. *Il.* 13.5.

<sup>70</sup> Procop. *Build.* 1.2.10; Hom. *Il.* 5.5.

three more allusions: one early in the *Wars*,<sup>71</sup> another early in the *Buildings*,<sup>72</sup> and the other in the *Secret History*.<sup>73</sup> Homer is not the only poet referred to by Procopius; there are at least two quotes from Pindar. In book eight of the *Wars* in the middle of a letter to Gubazes Mermeroz says, the admittedly general phrase, ‘know thyself’.<sup>74</sup> The second reference comes from the *Buildings* where it reads, “‘o’er a work’s beginnings’ as the old saying has it, ‘we needs must set a front that shines afar.’”<sup>75</sup> On several occasions Procopius simply refers to “the poets” (οἱ ποιηταί). Procopius mentions poets in the context of the Persian army’s arrival in Lazica in the second book of the *Persian Wars*, and in regard to the identification of that country with the location of the adventures of Medea and Jason.<sup>76</sup> In book eight in the midst of a discussion of Colchis and the fortress of Cotais, Procopius says that others claim that Aeetes was born there, and that as a result the poets call him a Coetaean.<sup>77</sup> Finally, while describing the ship of Aeneas, Procopius says that the poets call the ribs of the ship oak-stays.<sup>78</sup>

We now turn to the ancient playwrights. There is one lone reference to Aeschylus, and more specifically, the *Prometheus Unbound*, in the *Wars*.<sup>79</sup> On the other hand, Aristophanes is well represented. The *Clouds* is referred to on several occasions. Here is one example from the *Wars*: “As a result his thoughts soared aloft and were carried towards more distant hopes as he sought after impossible

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<sup>71</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.12.21; Hom. *Il.* 24.348, *Od.* 10.279.

<sup>72</sup> Procop. *Build.* 1.146; Hom. *Il.* 8.18-27.

<sup>73</sup> Procop. *SH.* 9.24; Hom. *Il.* 2.262, *Od.* 10.70. Cf. Roques (2000a: 14, n. 26) where he draws attention to Procopius’ use of σφαιρα instead of σειρα.

<sup>74</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.16.27; Pind. *Ol.* 6.4.

<sup>75</sup> Procop. *Build.* 1.1.19; Pind. *Ol.* 6.4.

<sup>76</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.17.2.

<sup>77</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.14.49.

<sup>78</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.22.12.

<sup>79</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.6.15, Προμηθεῖ τῷ Λυομένῳ. Cf. Arr. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 19.2, where a fragment of Aeschylus’ play is preserved; and Procop. *SH.* 12.14, a possible allusion to Aeschylus’ *Suppliants* (664).



things.”<sup>80</sup> Aristophanes’ *Knights* figures in the *Secret History*, from the name of Priscus the Blunderer,<sup>81</sup> to the several references in Procopius’ tirade against Justinian.<sup>82</sup> Aristophanes’ *Peace* is alluded to on three occasions.<sup>83</sup> There are also some echoes of Aristophanes’ *Frogs*, *Plutus*, and *Acharnians*, in Procopius’ *Secret History*.<sup>84</sup>

We now turn to the prose authors of antiquity, beginning with the briefer allusions. There are two references to “the teachings of Plato” in regard to the Gothic king Theodohad.<sup>85</sup> There is an allusion to Plato’s *Thaetetus* in the *Secret History*,<sup>86</sup> and his *Phaedrus* in the *Buildings*.<sup>87</sup> There is an allusion to Plato’s *Phaedo* in the *Buildings*.<sup>88</sup> On the other hand, the *Apology* is referred to a few times in the

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<sup>80</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.7.11. There was no particular reason why this example was chosen as the others say more or less the same thing. Procop. *Wars* 2.3.43: “But he is even looking about the heavens and is searching the retreats beyond the ocean”; Procop. *SH* 13.11: “For his flatters could persuade him with no difficulty that he was raised to the skies and ‘walking the air’”; Procop. *SH* 18.29: “all because of his parsimony, and instead of devoting himself to such things, scanning the heavens and developing a curious interest concerning the nature of God”; Procop. *SH* 20.22: “Consequently Constantius amassed great sums of money in a short time, and he assumed a sort of superhuman pomposity, treading the air and contemplating men with contempt”. Cf. Ar. *Nub.* 225, 228, and 350. Yet another reference is found at Procop. *SH* 14.11. Cf. Ar. *Nub.* 889ff.

<sup>81</sup> Procop. *SH* 16.7; Ar. *Eq.* passim, esp. 692.

<sup>82</sup> Rubin (1957: 307) alleges a reference to Ar. *Eq.* 41 at Procop. *SH* 17.31, though it is somewhat dubious.; *SH* 14.11, and Ar. *Eq.* 632; *SH* 9.50, and Ar. *Eq.* 692; Rubin (1957: 307) suggested that Procop. *SH* 9.50 referred to Ar. *Eq.* 1120, though I found no similarity between the two passages in question.

<sup>83</sup> Procop. *SH* 1.13; Ar. *Pax* 620; Procop. *SH* 9.50, and Ar. *Pax* 320; Procop. *SH* 13.3, and Ar. *Pax* 620.

<sup>84</sup> The similarities between the *Secret History* and the *Frogs* rest on one word: Procop. *SH* 17.37, “and when this remark was brought to Theodora, she commanded the servants to hoist the man aloft (ὀγκωθέντα),” Ar. *Ran.* 703 (and not 702 as Rubin claims), “if we puff ourselves up about (ογκωσομεσθα) this and are too proud to do it”. The similarities between Aristophanes’ *Plutus* at Ar. *Plu.* 307 and Procopius’ *Secret History* at Procop. *SH* 17.4, are dubious, although the tone of the two passages is similar. The echoes of Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* are at Ar. *Ach.* 711 and the *Secret History* at *SH* 17.4, and Ar. *Ach.* 704 and Procop. *SH* 18.21.

<sup>85</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.3.1; 5.6.10. At the same time, those passages referred to from Aristophanes’ *Clouds* that also refer to “walking on air”, are also found in Plato’s *Apology*. Cf. Pl. *Ap.* 19C.

<sup>86</sup> Procop. *SH* 13.10; Pl. *Thaet.* 175e.

<sup>87</sup> Procop. *Build.* 1.1.22; Pl. *Phdr.* 234e.

<sup>88</sup> Procop. *Build.* 5.8.4; Pl. *Phd.* 81a.

*Secret History*.<sup>89</sup> There is a lone reference to Strabo in the *Wars* in the context of a digression concerning the Amazons and the Caucasus.<sup>90</sup> Procopius was familiar with Diodorus and Isocrates.<sup>91</sup> Procopius also refers to Plutarch's *Alcibiades*.<sup>92</sup> Procopius also seems to have been familiar with some of Arrian's works, and he seems to be especially well acquainted with his *Periplus of the Black Sea*. In book eight of the *Wars* while describing the territory of the Lazi he says, "Arrian examined these things in this way".<sup>93</sup> A little earlier in the same book Procopius acknowledges, "that these things have been written down by some of the men of earlier times also".<sup>94</sup> Shortly after that Procopius says that the ancients called the city Apsaros Apsyrtus, a possible allusion to the *Periplus*.<sup>95</sup> He then goes on to say that those very writers claim that the Trapezuntines neighbour the Colchians, but disagrees. At least two ancient writers, namely Xenophon and Arrian, make that claim.<sup>96</sup> It is possible that there is one further allusion to Arrian at *Wars* 8.2.16, where Procopius says, "Indeed they say that at the time of the Roman emperor Trajan detachments of Roman soldiers were stationed as far as Lazi and Saginae." Similarly, in his *Periplus of the Black Sea* Arrian says that five cohorts were stationed at Apsaros, the city

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<sup>89</sup> Procop. *SH*. 13.11 "walking the air", and 20.22, "treading the air". Cf. Pl. *Ap.* 19C "treading the air". Cf. Pl. *Ap.* 19B, "Socrates sins and is a busybody, examining the things beneath the earth and in the heavens and making the weaker argument stronger and teaching others these same things". I discuss the possible intertextual relationship with Plato below pp 52-54.

<sup>90</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.3.6: "although much has been written about them both by Strabo and by some others". Rubin (1957: 308) also postulated that Procopius might be referring to Strabo in the *Buildings* in his discussion of the territory and tribes around the Danube where he says, "whether those writing the most ancient of histories called these nations Sauromatae Hamaxobioi or Metanastae (*Build.* 4.1.5)".

<sup>91</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.24.37; Diod. *Sic.* 14.8.5, Isoc. *Panath.* 246

<sup>92</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.24.29; Plut. *Vit. Alc.* 34.

<sup>93</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.14.48. It is important to note the information supplied by Procopius before he makes this comment is not found in any of the extant works of Arrian, as Dewing (1928: 205, n. 2) and Pekkanen (1964: 43) note. The information may have come from Arrians' *Historica Alanica*, which we do not have.

<sup>94</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.1.7.

<sup>95</sup> Arr. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 6.3. Cf. Procop. *Wars* 8.4.10, where Roques (2000a: 14) postulates an allusion to Arrian (*Peripl. M. Eux.* 19.1).

<sup>96</sup> See Xen. *An.* 4.8.22 and Arr. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 11.1 (Arrian actually refers to Xenophon).

which Procopius is referring to.<sup>97</sup> An important point to note about Procopius' knowledge of Arrian's *Periplus* is that he tends to refer only to the first half of the work; Pekkanen has argued that he was not familiar with the second half.<sup>98</sup>

I want to begin my discussion of the vexed issue of intertextuality by touching on Procopius' use of *exempla*.<sup>99</sup> Procopius may not be as liberal in his use of *exempla* as his predecessor Ammianus, or, to a certain degree, his successor Agathias, but he does find occasion to use them in his works. With that said, he does make a number of references to historical and mythical figures in his texts, often in the form of a digression, especially in the *Buildings* and Book 8 of the *Wars*.<sup>100</sup> I am going to focus on the historical *exempla*, in the words of Kelly, those "where the past is recollected and applied to the present".<sup>101</sup> Early in the *Secret History* Procopius likens Justinian to Domitian; though he is ostensibly concerned with his physical appearance, he is looking towards an ideal outcome to Justinian's reign, namely the emperor's death.<sup>102</sup> Anchises is mentioned in the context of Procopius' discussion of a Gothic expedition from the *Wars*.<sup>103</sup> The Italian town of Beneventum leads to the discussion of a host of *exempla*; Procopius says that it was

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<sup>97</sup> Arr. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 6.1. A possible problem is that Arrian's *Periplus* was written for Hadrian: "Arrian, to the Emperor Caesar Trajan Hadrian Augustus, greetings (trans. Liddle)." Αὐτοκράτοι Καίσαρι Τραιανῶ Ἀδριανῶ Σεβαστῶ Ἀρριανὸς χαίρειν. At the same time, it is only a problem if we assume that Procopius had a perfect knowledge of the nomenclature of Roman emperors from Augustus onwards, which is unlikely. He mentions Trajan on two other occasions: at *Wars* 4.9.2, and at *Buildings* 4.5.15. The reference from the *Wars* suggests that Procopius' knowledge of former Roman emperors was limited; moreover, Trajan was one of the best known emperors and upon reading the introduction to Arrian's *Periplus*, he may have recognized the name Trajan and assumed that the title referred to him, and not Hadrian.

<sup>98</sup> Pekkanen 1964.

<sup>99</sup> For a definition of the *exemplum*, in reference to Ammianus, see Kelly (2008: 258-266).

<sup>100</sup> This excludes the introductions to the respective sections of the *Wars*, which contain a host of historical, and pseudo-historical, material.

<sup>101</sup> Kelly 2008: 260.

<sup>102</sup> Procop. *SH.* 8.13.

<sup>103</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.22.31.

originally called Maleventus by the ancient Romans;<sup>104</sup> he then gives an extended discussion of the site's Trojan pedigree, which helps set the stage for the heroic events to follow at Rome.<sup>105</sup> Midway through the *Persian Wars* Procopius likens Justinian to other monarchs, particularly eastern ones,<sup>106</sup> who have attempted to enlarge their territory including both Cyrus the Great and Alexander the Great.<sup>107</sup> Only a few lines into the *Buildings* he does much the same regarding Cyrus, as he does three books later.<sup>108</sup> Themistocles is another leader to whom Justinian is compared in the *Buildings*.<sup>109</sup> Procopius makes a reference to the battle of Cannae in book seven of the *Wars*, which he notes was a great disaster; it comes in the context of Belisarius' disastrous return to Italy, which is not an insignificant point.<sup>110</sup> There is an extended discussion of Trojan War figures midway through *Wars* book VIII in the context of Totila's dispatch of nearly 300 ships to Greece.<sup>111</sup> Among those referred to are the Phaeacians, Calypso, Odysseus, Ithaca, Agamemnon, Iphigenia, Artemis, and Troy itself. Although this case may seem to be little more than a mythological cum historical digression rather than an exemplum per se on the part of Procopius, I think we are meant to read this as a reference to the Homeric hero-like characteristics of Totila, who had been characterized as an Achilles like figure throughout the *Gothic Wars*.<sup>112</sup> In the preface of the *Secret History*, Nero,

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<sup>104</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.15.4; cf. Pliny 3.11.16.

<sup>105</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.15.8-10.

<sup>106</sup> Whether this association is meant to be a subtle criticism of Justinian is a question beyond the scope of this thesis; however, Cyrus is an interesting comparandum nonetheless. Cf. Kaldellis 2004: 54-55.

<sup>107</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.2.15.

<sup>108</sup> Procop. *Build.* 1.1.12-13. In this first reference Procopius says that Cyrus is the best known king in regard to building achievements; he then briefly asks whether this Cyrus should be equated with the Cyrus whose education is described by Xenophon. Procop. *Build.* 3.1.5. This historical digression is full of historical anecdotes, particularly those involving the Persians, Parthians, and Armenians (Procop. *Build.* 3.1.4-15).

<sup>109</sup> Procop. *Build.* 1.1.7.

<sup>110</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.18.19.

<sup>111</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.22.17-32.

<sup>112</sup> See my discussion in chapter five below pp 296-301.

Sardanapalus, and Semiramis serve as *exempla* for Justinian and Theodora.<sup>113</sup> The majority of the *exempla* found in Procopius' works are used in reference to primary leaders and characters, such as Belisarius and Justinian. We are also not given the source of any of the respective *exempla*, and so as with intertextuality in general, it is a question of interpretation.<sup>114</sup>

Having discussed brief allusions and *exempla*, I now want to turn my attention to some of the more complex textual relationships that suffuse Procopius' works, especially the *Wars*.<sup>115</sup> To this point I have yet to discuss the relationship between Procopius and his predecessors, including Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, and Polybius. The issue has attracted a lot of attention of late, with studies that have postulated relationships between the works of Procopius and Thucydides, Procopius and Plato, and Procopius and Xenophon having appeared over the past decade or so. Surprisingly, there has been no recent treatment of the relationship between Herodotus and Procopius; there has been very little since the nineteenth century study of Braun.<sup>116</sup> A number of scholars have commented on Procopius' relationship to Herodotus, if only in passing.<sup>117</sup> This is despite the fact that Procopius quotes Herodotus verbatim in book VIII of the *Wars*.<sup>118</sup> He even goes

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<sup>113</sup> Procop. *SH*. 1.9. cf. Procop. *SH*. 1.7.

<sup>114</sup> Some of these examples might be considered part of the common body of knowledge in antiquity and so need not ultimately refer back to any particular source. That does not, however, make invalid the suggestion of an intertextual dimension. Intertextuality is largely dependent on the actions of the reader himself.

<sup>115</sup> For a succinct overview of intertextuality and the classics see Schmitz (2007: 77-85). Kelly (2008 *passim*, esp. 161-221) and Hinds (1998) discuss the issue in greater depth, though they focus on Latin literature rather than Greek. For an introduction to intertextuality see Still and Worton (1990: 1-44), with bibliography.

<sup>116</sup> Braun 1894. Kislinger's (1998) paper is primarily concerned with historical matters rather than historiographical ones, particularly the defence of Thermopylae in the age of Justinian, and so omits any discussion of textual relationships.

<sup>117</sup> Evans 1972: 36, 37; Cameron 1985: 38, n. 30; Whitby 1994: 243; 2000d: 18-22; Brodka 2004: 48-50; Kaldellis 2004: 92; Börm 2007: 255ff.; Treadgold 2007: 192ff.

<sup>118</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.6.14, "And it seems that it is the right time to insert into my narrative the very words of Herodotus which are as follows. 'Nor am I able to conjecture for what reason it is that, though the earth is one, three names are applied to it which are women's names. And

so far as to give us the book number of the quote: “Herodotus of Halicarnassus in the Fourth Book of his history”.<sup>119</sup> Hunger has postulated a connection between Procopius’ description of the ditch made by the Hephthalites against the Persians early in the *Persian Wars*, and Herodotus’ description of a similar technique employed by the Phocians.<sup>120</sup> There are also three references to Herodotus in the *Buildings*.<sup>121</sup> The *Persian Wars*, beginning with the *Wars*’ preface, is the obvious place to look for Herodotean echoes, though book VIII should also be considered filled as it is with geographical digressions and mythical figures.<sup>122</sup> The Thucydidean character of Procopius’ *Wars* has long been recognized,<sup>123</sup> though the Athenian historian is never named. Procopius does use a Thucydidean phrase on at least one occasion in the *Secret History*.<sup>124</sup> There are a number of similarities between events described by Thucydides and events described by Procopius. Cameron, for instance, notes a number of similarities between Procopius’ and Thucydides’ descriptions of their respective plagues.<sup>125</sup> On the other hand, Adshead has argued

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its borders have been established as the Egyptian Nile and the Colchian Phasis. But others name the Tanais River, which empties into the Maeotic Lake and the Cimmerian Strait.”. The two texts are indeed nearly identical (I compared the Teubner text of Procopius with the Oxford text of Herodotus). The only differences are minor: P - ἄπρο for ἐπ (H); P - τοῦ for ὄτευ (H); P - κέεται for κείται (H); P - ἐπωνυμίην for ἐπωνυμίας (H); P - ὀρίσματα for οὔρισματα (H); and P - λέγουσιν for λέγουσι (H) These minor differences need not surprise given the differences that can occur in manuscript traditions. The quote itself is found at Hdt. 4.45. Cf. Reynolds and Wilson (1991) on Greek and Latin palaeography.

<sup>119</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.6.12; Hdt. 4.42ff.

<sup>120</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.4.1ff; Hdt. 8.28ff; Hunger 1969/1970: 27. cf. Polyaeus 6.18.2.

<sup>121</sup> Procop. *Build* 4.1.5; Hdt. 4.21. Procop. *Build*. 4.2.8; Hdt. 7.175-213. Procop. *Build*. 5.3.8; Hdt. 7.56.

<sup>122</sup> See my comments in chapter six below.

<sup>123</sup> See, for example, the comments of Cameron (1985: 3), Brodka (2004: 15-16) and Treadgold (2007: 177).

<sup>124</sup> Procop. *SH* 13.12. Cf. Thuc. 2.89.

<sup>125</sup> Cameron 1985: 40; Meier 1999. Procopius was not the only historian who may have used Thucydides’ description of the plague as model, for there are similarities between his account, and that of the fourteenth-century Byzantine historian John Kantakouzenos. Though, Kantakouzenos may also be alluding to Procopius, who served as one of John Kinnamos’ models (Brand 1976: 7; Scott 1981: 66). Cf. Hunger 1976, 1978: 45; Miller 1976; Scott 1981: 72.

that Procopius' sieges are greatly indebted to those found in Thucydides.<sup>126</sup> The siege of Naples described by Procopius, and the siege of Plataea described by Thucydides have a number of parallels;<sup>127</sup> however, they are, in her words, only "the curtain raisers for the *pièces de résistance*", the siege of Rome and the siege of Syracuse.<sup>128</sup> Charles Pazdernik has recently gone further, laying out a detailed set of correspondences between Thucydides and Procopius, in regard to Procopius' casting of Belisarius in the mould of Thucydides' Brasidas,<sup>129</sup> and in the interplay between freedom and slavery in domestic and international political contexts in the works of both historians.<sup>130</sup> Beyond the allusions to Plato that I noted above, Anthony Kaldellis has proposed a much stronger relationship between the *Wars* and Plato, a provocative claim that has garnered a lot of attention.<sup>131</sup> In particular, Kaldellis has argued that Platonic mimesis underscores the structure of the *Wars*,<sup>132</sup> and to such an extent that it is in many ways Platonic philosophy in disguise.<sup>133</sup> As we saw above, there are a number of references to Xenophon. There is an allusion in the *Buildings* to Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*;<sup>134</sup> three books later Procopius refers to his *Anabasis*.<sup>135</sup> Procopius also alludes to Xenophon's *Anabasis* in the *Wars*.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Adshead 1990: 93-104 (part I of her paper).

<sup>127</sup> There also seem to be a number of parallels between Dexippus' description of the siege of Philippolis and Thucydides' of Plataea, as well as Priscus' of Naissus and the Thucydides' of Plataea. The emphasis on this particular siege could be the result of the shared rhetorical education of the three historians (Dexippus, Priscus, and Procopius), for the siege of Plataea is singled out as an exemplary ekphrasis in progymnasmata, on which see below pp 64-66. Cf. Hunger 1969/1970: 26.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Pazdernik (2000: 171-181) for a discussion of the siege of Naples and its Thucydidean flavour from a different perspective.

<sup>129</sup> Pazdernik 2000: 149-187.

<sup>130</sup> Pazdernik 1997.

<sup>131</sup> Kaldellis 2004: 94-117. The *Republic* is a central text in this relationship.

<sup>132</sup> On mimesis in general see the important study of Auerbach (1953). On mimesis in Byzantine literature see Hunger (1969/1970). Cresci (1986) does take a brief look at Procopius' use of mimesis.

<sup>133</sup> Kaldellis 2004: 117. Kaldellis' view has come under fire. See the comments of Greatrex (2003: 62-67) and Whitby (2007d: 74-76).

<sup>134</sup> Procop. *Build.* 1.1.13.

<sup>135</sup> Procop. *Build.* 4.1.16; Xen. *An.* 3.1.42.

Pazdernik has uncovered a correspondence between Xenophon's *Hellenica* and Procopius' *Wars* through the persons of Pharnabazus and Belisarius.<sup>137</sup> Finally, Procopius also seems to have been familiar with Polybius; the reference to the disaster at Cannae may be such an allusion.<sup>138</sup> Evans for one, believed that Polybius was "the one with whom he begs comparison most."<sup>139</sup> When Procopius expounds the virtues of Belisarius after his departure, his discussion of the rewards implemented to bolster troop loyalty is reminiscent of Polybius' discussion of the Roman practices of punishment and reward described at length in book 6.<sup>140</sup> Much of the war in Italy against the Goths is reminiscent of comparable Republican wars, which might again point towards Polybius.<sup>141</sup> Polybius is one of the last known Greek historians to have described a major war in Italy prior to Procopius, and perhaps this is no coincidence.<sup>142</sup> *Tyche* features prominently in the *Wars*, as it does

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<sup>136</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.4.17; Xen. *An.* preface 3. Procop. *Wars* 4.16.12-25; Xen. *An.* 7.9-10. Cf. Kaldellis 2004: 256, n. 57.

<sup>137</sup> Pazdernik 2006.

<sup>138</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.18.19. With that said, Cassius Dio should not be ruled out.

<sup>139</sup> Evans 1972: 133.

<sup>140</sup> Polybius' famous digression on the Roman military systems is found at 6.19.1-42.6 (the end of chapter 42 is fragmentary). As regards the system of punishments and rewards compare Polybius at 6.39.1ff. with Procopius at 7.1.8, which strikes me as a synopsis of Polybius. Of course, this could be little more than a reflection of the continuity of one element of the Roman army: its system of punishments and rewards. There are Polybian echoes in other sections such as the preface, especially his comments on the importance of experience as well as the utility of history. Polybius' emphasis on *tyche* also springs to mind. Cf. Evans 1972: 119, 133; Walbank 1972: 58-65; Kaldellis 2004: 19-21, 174, 218.

<sup>141</sup> Whether this is because Procopius constructed his narrative with Polybius in mind, at least in part, or because the war had many characteristics that were similar to either the Punic Wars, or Republican history in general is hard to say. Cf. Sarris (2006: 223), who suggests that the Gothic war was reminiscent of a social war, and in that regard one thinks of the famous one that ravaged the Italian peninsula early in the first century BC.

<sup>142</sup> The civil wars of the late second century do affect Italy though we do not have Dio's version, and Herodian's account starts after the events in question. Dio's account of the civil war of 69 is also fragmentary. We have virtually nothing from the fragmentary historians of the fifth century, and Zosimus' *Nova Historia* 'breaks off' just before the sack of Italy. Olympiodorus' *History*, for example, is fragmentary; furthermore, it may not have been terribly detailed. Thus, if Procopius sought an earlier historian for some direction in regard to the narration of a war in Italy he may have sought Polybius. Thucydides too, of course, also describes war in Italy, though for him it is confined to Sicily, as per the historical reality of the events he describes. Appian also describes events in Italy; the structure of Procopius' *Wars* itself is somewhat reminiscent of Appian's *Roman History*.



in Polybius' *Histories*; while both ascribe a different role to Tyche, Polybius may have been the model for Procopius in this regard.<sup>143</sup>

What can we conclude from this survey of Procopius' reading of Greek literature? Based on his education alone, there can be little doubt that Procopius was well read.<sup>144</sup> Procopius' penchant for alluding to authors such as Homer and Aristophanes is unsurprising given their prominence in Greek education. The same holds for his relationship with Thucydides, long the benchmark for ancient historiography. On the other hand, allusions, such as those to Pindar and Aeschylus, are a bit more unexpected. When the quantity of Procopius' allusions is compared to the quantity of some of his contemporaries, who would have attained a similar level of education, Procopius is far more sparing in his use of classical allusions.<sup>145</sup> Another issue is how far to push these alleged allusions. As I have

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<sup>143</sup> The role of Tyche in Procopius has been a contentious subject for a while. Cameron argues that it was little more than literary affectation; Kaldellis argues that it underscores Procopius' paganism. Tyche was a prominent part of classical historiography for centuries (and a popular goddess among many pagans), and this continued into late antiquity. Even Christian historians like Socrates Scholasticus used tyche in their work. In regard to Socrates, "as a result of his reading of the pagan classics, and his own personal contact with believing pagans, a good many pagan terms crept into Socrates' writing." That quote comes from Chesnut's (1977: 179) study of the earliest Christian historians. In fact, Chesnut (1977: 213) has demonstrated that even the most Christian of historians incorporated tyche in their work. Chesnut suggests that the Christian and pagan worlds came together in Procopius. For, "the transition from the pagan concept of Fortune found in pre-Constantine secular history to the mixed pagan-Christian literary language of the sixth-century secular historian Procopius takes place through the intermediary of the non-secular, completely ecclesiastical historians of the fourth and early fifth centuries, who first combined Fortune motifs with Christian interpretations of history (Chesnut 1977: 181, n. 77)." See now the discussion of Whitby (2007d: 83-87).

<sup>144</sup> I do not hold to the view that Procopius composed his three works with lexicia, such as that of John Stobaeus, at hand to select what he felt was a suitable reference at will, with little regard for the context of his own work, or those to which he alluded.

<sup>145</sup> As regards John the Lydian Maas (1992: 6) notes that learned allusions to classical culture are ubiquitous in John the Lydian's works. Agathias, whose *History* was much shorter than Procopius', makes quite a few allusions. Scholars, however, have disagreed on his success at this endeavour: Cameron (1964: 33-52; 1970: 60ff, 112) is critical, while others, such as Adshead (1983: 82-87), Whitby (1992: 37-38), and Kaldellis (1997, 1999a) are more positive. John Malalas, who may not have been as well educated as John Lydus, Agathias, or Dioscorus, unsurprisingly, perhaps, seems to have been a little less liberal in his use of allusions than those three, though even he makes more explicit allusions than Procopius does. Scott (1990: 79) claims that Malalas was hostile to classical culture, despite

noted, intertextuality is a subject of some debate. One must be careful when tackling this issue: not all texts from antiquity survive, and those that do are not necessarily extant.<sup>146</sup> Dio is particularly troublesome in this regard.<sup>147</sup> Thus, it can be difficult to determine where to draw the line between a direct relationship, such as that suggested by Adshead between Procopius and Thucydides in the siege of Rome;<sup>148</sup> a common intellectual debt, which was the product of, the long-standing and shared Hellenistic educational system; and the staying power – dare I say popularity? – of the genre of classical and classicizing historiography. Yet, many of the examples that I have discussed above are complex, and whether deliberate or not, add meaning to the passages in question.

### **Military Career**

We now turn to Procopius' military career. Procopius officially enters history in 527 when he was appointed *assessor* to the general Belisarius.<sup>149</sup> Procopius stayed with Belisarius throughout his campaigns in the east from 527 to 531. By 532 Procopius had returned to Constantinople, and was present for the Nika revolt.<sup>150</sup> In 533 he accompanied Belisarius to Africa, via Syracuse in Sicily, in the expedition

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his educational background. On the other hand Dioscorus “expresses the interrelationships of his world through a wealth of figures of speech drawn from the classics” (MacCoull 1988: 57). MacCoull makes a strong case for a more positive interpretation of Dioscorus' abilities.<sup>146</sup> This is a point frequently raised by Kelly (2008) in his penetrating new study of allusion and intertextuality in Ammianus.

<sup>147</sup> See Potter 1999: 70-78.

<sup>148</sup> Adshead 1990.

<sup>149</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.12.24 “Then Procopius, who wrote this, was chosen as his adviser.” On Procopius' career as an assessor see Martindale (1992: 1060-1062). Trombley (1999) explores Ammianus' career as a protector and on the basis of his discussion, the two historians may have had similar roles, at least on occasion, in their military careers. Cf. Rubin 1957: 296-297; Börm 2007: 47; Treadgold 2007: 179.

<sup>150</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.24.1-58. Since, as far as we know, Procopius was still Beliasarius' assessor, and Belisarius himself helped put down the revolt, Procopius must have been present. On the Nika revolt see Greatrex (1997). Cf. Börm 2007: 47.

against the Vandals.<sup>151</sup> Procopius probably returned to Constantinople with Belisarius, and so was present to observe his triumph.<sup>152</sup> Belisarius was recalled to Constantinople in 534, before returning west for the war against the Goths in 535. With the exception of those occasions when Procopius was sent on special missions, he was with Belisarius throughout the early phases of the Gothic wars.<sup>153</sup> He was in Rome during the siege of the years 537-538, he was in Auximum for the siege of the summer and autumn of 539, and was in Ravenna in May of 540 when the Roman army entered the city.<sup>154</sup> Thereafter he returned to Constantinople, and was certainly in Constantinople in 542, as his description of the plague suggests.<sup>155</sup> Procopius may have kept his position on Belisarius' staff in the eastern campaigns of 541 and 542, but following the general's recall, he was probably dismissed from office. Presumably, any sojourns to Palestine aside, Procopius spent the rest of his days in the capital.<sup>156</sup>

### **Procopius the Rhetor**

One contentious issue is Procopius' possible career as a rhetor.<sup>157</sup> Agathias, in his preface, says that he will not go into much detail about "most of the events of the age of Justinian since they have been precisely described by Procopius the

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<sup>151</sup> Treadgold (2007: 181) suggests that Procopius was present at the war council in Constantinople that convened in regard to the possible invasion of Africa.

<sup>152</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.8.3-14; Martindale 1992: 1061; Börm 2007: 47; Treadgold (2007): 181.

<sup>153</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.11.3; 6.23.23-28; 6.29.32. cf. Börm 2007: 48.

<sup>154</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.4.14; Rubin 1957: 298; Martindale 1992: 1061-1062; Börm 2007: 48; Treadgold 2007: 182-183.

<sup>155</sup> Signes Codoñer 2000: 14; Kouroumalis 2005: 10. The similarity between the plague in Constantinople described by Procopius and the plagues in Athens described by Thucydides does not vitiate the accuracy of Procopius' description.

<sup>156</sup> The possible exception is the years 547-548, when there seems to be more detail about the Gothic wars than there had been for the years immediately preceding and following 547-548. In the absence of more evidence, this must remain speculation.

<sup>157</sup> For a more complete discussion of the problems and an argument in favour of considering Procopius a lawyer see Greatrex (2001); for the opposite view see Howard-Johnston (2000: 22).

rhetor from Caesarea”.<sup>158</sup> In one of the surviving fragments from Menander we have the following: “Menander says about the historian and advocate Procopius”.<sup>159</sup> Evagrius also calls Procopius a rhetor on three occasions, one of which is particularly interesting and relevant. Towards the end of his history Evagrius says:

...and events after them have been collected by Priscus the *rhetor* and others...Events from him as far as the times of Justinian have been covered by Procopius the *rhetor*. The sequel to these has been recorded in succession by Agathias the *rhetor*...<sup>160</sup>

Procopius is also called a “rhetor and sophist” in the Suda.<sup>161</sup> By the middle of the sixth century, when Procopius was writing, a rhetor was an attorney. There are at least two places in Procopius’ *Secret History* where he uses the term rhetor to refer to a lawyer.<sup>162</sup> There is a third place, in which Procopius’ usage is ambiguous.<sup>163</sup> The bulk of the evidence, however, suggests that the term was used to refer to a trained lawyer: such is clear from Agathias’ comments.<sup>164</sup> Menander’s statement is even more explicit. Taken together, all this evidence suggests that Procopius had legal training, and that it was relevant to, and exploited in, his writing.<sup>165</sup> There is one last point that seems to point to Procopius’ legal training. Procopius seems to have had a pretty good grasp of Latin; good enough in fact, to discuss some Latin

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<sup>158</sup> Agathias Prooem. 22.

<sup>159</sup> Men. Prot. fr. 14.2. trans. Blockley.

<sup>160</sup> Evagr. *HE* 5.24. trans. Whitby. The other two references are at 4.12, and 4.19.

<sup>161</sup> Suda Π 2479.

<sup>162</sup> Procop. *SH*. 26.2, 26.35.

<sup>163</sup> Procop. *SH*. 30.18. The text reads: “Among the rhetors of Caesarea there was a certain Evangelos no obscure man”. Unfortunately, the context of Procopius’ discussion leaves the specifics of Evangelos’ profession open.

<sup>164</sup> Howard-Johnston (2000: 22), who argues that Procopius was not a trained lawyer, nevertheless says that Agathias, through his usage of the term rhetor, “implies thereby that he was a trained lawyer (such being the normal meaning of *rhetor* at the time, as it is in Procopius’ usage)”.

<sup>165</sup> Treadgold (2007: 177) accepts the notion that Procopius had legal training. The last of the classicizing historians, Theophylact Simocatta, was also a trained lawyer (Whitby 1988: 28ff.).

etymology.<sup>166</sup> His verbatim quotes from the sibylline oracle suggest some knowledge of Latin.<sup>167</sup> By the time Procopius was writing Latin was being used less and less in Constantinople and the East,<sup>168</sup> though it had not fallen out of use entirely. Knowledge of Latin, therefore, is not implausible.<sup>169</sup>

### Procopius' Literary Career

Though some of the dates of Procopius' works are fairly clear, others are uncertain, and considerable debate surrounds them. The first seven books of the *Wars* were likely published in 550/551.<sup>170</sup> Book VIII is a bit more problematic, with dates of 553 or 554 preferred by most,<sup>171</sup> and with Evans opting for 557.<sup>172</sup> Though most scholars would assign a date of 550/551 for the *Secret History*,<sup>173</sup> Brian Croke has recently stepped into the fray and put forth an argument of 558/559.<sup>174</sup> Whether one opts for an earlier or a later date for the work, the discussion ultimately rests on when to believe that Procopius thought Justinian's reign truly began: during that of his uncle Justin in 518, or his official coronation in April 527. The argument has been

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<sup>166</sup> See, for example, the following quote: (Procop. *Wars* 8.5.13) "receiving the pay from the emperor just as the other soldiers did every single year and being called foederati; for so the Romans at that time called them in the Latin language, insinuating, I think, that the Goths had not been defeated by them in war, but had come into peaceful relations with them on the basis of some treaty; for the Latins call treaties in war 'foedera'". Börm (2007: 47), on the other hand, is not convinced. Treadgold (2007: 177), however, does believe that Procopius had some knowledge of Latin.

<sup>167</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.7.7. Though, some might have been written in Greek. See Potter (1990).

<sup>168</sup> On the increasing use of Greek in the fifth century East see Millar (2006).

<sup>169</sup> John the Lydian's (*Mag.* 2.12, 3.27) comments do point towards a drop in usage. On the other hand, there was clearly still a place for Latin as the works of Marcellinus, Jordanes, and Corippus indicate. The *Digest* of course, was also written in Latin, as were the commands in Maurice's *Strategikon*.

<sup>170</sup> Rubin 1957: 354; Cameron 1985: 9; Evans 1996a: 301; Börm 2007: 50-52; Treadgold 2007: 189.

<sup>171</sup> Rubin 1957: 354; Martindale 1992: 1064; Greatrex 2003: 55-56; Brodka 2004: 17; Treadgold 2007: 189-190. Börm (2007: 51) sidesteps the issue. Cf. Agathias Proem 32.

<sup>172</sup> Evans 1996: 312.

<sup>173</sup> Rubin 1957: 356 (following Haury); Cameron 1985: 8-9; Martindale 1992: 1063; Signes Codoñer 2000: 53, 2003: 53; Brodka 2004: 17; Treadgold 2007: 187.

<sup>174</sup> Croke 2005b. Croke is not the first to argue for a later date. Cf. Scott 1987; Kislinger 1998; Cataudella 2003: 401.

that Procopius does not tell us when he conceives of Justinian's reign as starting.<sup>175</sup> Croke, however, has argued against this, along the way pointing out an unnecessary textual emendation on Haury's part.<sup>176</sup> He also discounts the supposition that the work cannot post-date the *Buildings* by again challenging a pair of questionable emendations of Haury's, which Whitby had discussed earlier.<sup>177</sup> Although not definitive, Croke's arguments are convincing, and on balance, then, it is better to date the work to 558/559.

Despite the problems surrounding the dating of the *Secret History*, it is the *Buildings* that has attracted most of the attention. Yet again, the choice is between an earlier date and a later date, here 554 or 560.<sup>178</sup> One of the arguments in favour of an earlier date is based on a number of omissions by Procopius in the *Buildings*, notably the Samaritan revolt of 555, the Tzani revolt of 557, and the collapse of the dome of Hagia Sophia in 558. Arguments from silence, however, are always problematic, and as such their omission need not mean that Procopius was unaware of the events, as Whitby correctly asserts.<sup>179</sup> Greatrex has acknowledged the danger in such argumentation, but suggested that Procopius' claim that the enemy overran Thrace "recently" suggests that it could not have been written around 560, particularly if Procopius was referring to an incursion in 544.<sup>180</sup> He notes that there

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<sup>175</sup> Procop. *SH* 6.19, 24.29 Cf. Signes Codoñer 2003: 43.

<sup>176</sup> Croke 2005b: 414, n. 28. Cf. Procop. *SH* 12.29 (2001 edition, page 83), where Haury substitutes διοικουμέ for διοικουμένου.

<sup>177</sup> Whitby 1985: 144; Croke 2005b: 430. The first emendation is from ἄμπροσθεν to ἄπισθεν, which necessitates the further emendation from γεγράφεται to γέγραπται. Cf. Procop. *SH*. 18.38 (2001 edition, page 118).

<sup>178</sup> Early – Cameron 1985: 9-11; Greatrex 1994: 107-113, 2003: 46-52; Howard-Johnston 2000: 21; Croke 2005b: 424-430; Treadgold 2007: 190-191. Late: Whitby 1985, 2000d; Evans 1996a: 303-306; Kislinger 1998; Roques 2000b: 43; Cataudella 2003: 397-400.

<sup>179</sup> Whitby 2000d: 63, n. 29.

<sup>180</sup> Greatrex 2003: 51. Cf. Procop. *Build.* 4.10.9.

were some minor raids in 558 or 559, but they were less successful.<sup>181</sup> Given the nature of panegyric, however, need the incursions have been so volatile? What is more, if Procopius was trying to promote Justinian's achievements, a successful resistance on the part of the Roman defensive system, which Justinian oversaw, would have served Procopius' purposes well.

There are three more arguments in favour of an earlier dating that need to be noted. The first is based on the activities of three men, Artabanes, Arsaces, and Chanaranges: all three were purportedly involved in a plot to assassinate Justinian, but were detected. Since we have no evidence for their activities in the late 550s, this need not mean that those three men were no longer active.<sup>182</sup> The second argument comes from an earlier paper in which Greatrex questions the speedy construction of the bridge over the Sangarios.<sup>183</sup> Given the problems in the capital with Hagia Sophia, and the costs that would be involved in its repairs, Greatrex does not think that valuable funds would be diverted to the bridge.<sup>184</sup> As regards the speed of the bridge's construction – perhaps three years – this can be attributed to the importance of the route for the supply of troops and supplies for the Roman effort against the Persians in Lazica.<sup>185</sup> The third and last counterargument centres on the trustworthiness of Theophanes' account. At A.M. 6052, which corresponds to the years 559-560, Theophanes claims that Justinian began construction on the bridge over the Sangarios. Malalas' text, as it survives, is not extant at this point; we cannot compare the two. As such, doubts have been raised about Theophanes' accuracy at

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<sup>181</sup> Evans (1996a: 304), however, feels that the Kutrigur attacks best fit this comment. Kislinger's (1998) attempt to connect the Kutrigur invasion with a reference in the *Wars* (2.4.10-11) is interesting, if ultimately unconvincing.

<sup>182</sup> Again, arguments from silence should be avoided.

<sup>183</sup> Greatrex 1995: 128-129.

<sup>184</sup> Yet, as Whitby (1985: 146) states, there seems to have been less construction work during the 550's and thus, two major undertakings, notably the dome and the bridge, do not seem to be beyond the means of Justinian.

<sup>185</sup> Whitby 1985: 146.

this point. Yet, the dates given in nearby entries are accurate, and we need not cast aside Theophanes' attributing of the year 559/560 as the start date for the bridge's construction. Admittedly, this is the most problematic aspect of a later date for the *Buildings*.<sup>186</sup> Still, the arguments in favour of an earlier date do not convince, and on balance we should date the *Buildings* to around 560.<sup>187</sup>

### **The Other Faces of Procopius: Philosophy and Engineering**

There are two more issues left to consider: the possibility that Procopius was a closet philosopher; and his suggested career as an engineer. Kaldellis has recently argued that he was a philosopher who had mastered Platonic philosophy, and in particular the *Gorgias*, and the *Republic*, both of which are said to underscore his work.<sup>188</sup> There are a few overt references to Plato in the *Wars*.<sup>189</sup> This could mean that Procopius' knowledge was quite cerebral: his allusions were esoteric, or so Kaldellis. The lack of explicit references could also mean that Procopius did not give Plato much thought, and so kept his references to a minimum. It could also be that Kaldellis overstates Procopius' familiarity.<sup>190</sup> In a paper on teachers in the Byzantine world Browning has said that "philosophy was always an optional subject, perhaps studied superficially by many, but in depth by only a few"; he adds that the Neo-Platonic variety was the variant of choice among teachers and students of

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<sup>186</sup> Whitby 1985: 137-141; Greatrex 2003: 50.

<sup>187</sup> Barring the discovery of some lost evidence, it is unlikely that there will ever be a consensus regarding the dates for any of Procopius' works. With that said, two points should always be borne in mind. First, using hypothetical cross-references to other texts, such as from the *Wars* to the *Secret History*, are problematic, and should be used with caution. Second, a text need not have been finished in the year of the last known event recorded therein.

<sup>188</sup> Kaldellis 2004: 94-117. See the rebuttal of Whitby (2007d: 74-76).

<sup>189</sup> We noted that his knowledge was not superficial; but references to Plato do not seem to pervade Procopius' work.

<sup>190</sup> Such is the feeling of Whitby 2005b: 648-650; Whitby 2007d: 74-76.



philosophy.<sup>191</sup> Procopius undoubtedly had some philosophical training, and indeed, as Whitby admits, “it would be surprising if Procopius did not have some knowledge of Plato.”<sup>192</sup> That need not mean, however, complete immersion.

Kaldellis also believes that Procopius was enraged by the closure of the Academy in Athens by Justinian in 529, a story connected to Agathias’ tale about the Athenian philosophers and their flight to Persia, and a point on which he is conspicuously silent.<sup>193</sup> My belief that Procopius was a Christian does not vitiate his philosophical leanings. He could have been both, and the claim that as a result of those leanings he needed to conceal his true views, is perhaps overstated. As Wildberg notes, “the early church fathers were steeped in philosophy, even if one might hesitate to count them as philosophers.”<sup>194</sup> I am sceptical about Procopius’ alleged philosophical education in Athens and anger over Justinian’s anti-pagan legislation, the general effects of which were not felt for some time.<sup>195</sup> Even if we

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<sup>191</sup> Browning 1997: 102-103.

<sup>192</sup> Whitby 2005b: 650.

<sup>193</sup> “Not long before Damascius of Syria, Simplicius of Cilicia, Eulamius of Phrygia, Priscian of Lydia, Hermes and Diogenes of Phoenicia and Isidore of Gaza, all of them, to sue a poetic turn of phrase, the quintessential flower of the philosophers of our age, had come to the conclusion, since the official religion of the Roman empire was not to their liking, that the Persian state was much superior. So they gave a ready hearing to the stories in general circulation according to which Persia was the land of ‘Plato’s philosopher king’ in which justice reigned supreme (Agathias 2.20.3, trans. Frendo).” Agathias’ reference is the only one that we have for this exodus which took place c. 531; moreover, these seven philosophers, who were based in Athens, returned to the Roman empire not long after (Wildberg 2005: 330). Had Procopius been so concerned with Justinian’s actions towards the Athenian philosophers, we must wonder why he did not refer to it, particularly in his *Secret History*. Furthermore, it is important to note that the Academy was not a public institution, but rather a private one. Teaching was done in the homes of the philosophers, and so despite the legal measures taken by Justinian, Platonic teaching continued in Athens for decades before finally disappearing towards the end of the sixth century. Plus, most Athenian philosophers were also financed privately. See Wildberg (2005: 316-340) for an overview of philosophy in the age of Justinian, and Watts (2006: 128-142) for a detailed discussion of the closing of the Athenian schools. Watts (2006: 111-142, 232-256) also discusses the cultural and intellectual life of the Athenian and Alexandrian schools in the sixth century.

<sup>194</sup> Wildberg 2005: 334.

<sup>195</sup> Although this evidence is largely circumstantial, in the *Buildings* Procopius seems to be unfamiliar with Greece (though the same is true for Italy, which he was undoubtedly familiar with).

accept that Procopius was a philosopher, it is worth bearing in mind that for the most part, the philosophers of the Alexandrian and Athenian schools sought to harmonize both Platonic and Aristotelian doctrine: if Procopius' philosophical leanings were Platonic, we should not have found any neutral or positive Aristotelian allusions.<sup>196</sup> We should be surprised, therefore, if Procopius' philosophical understanding betrays any firm convictions one way (i.e. Platonic or Aristotelian) or another. One last point: in one of Procopius' references to the *Apology*, he vilifies Justinian in the language employed by Plato in the charges against Socrates.<sup>197</sup> Why might Procopius have used language used against a central figure in Platonic philosophy to slander Justinian? Though he may have been familiar with some Platonic dialogues, and clearly some of the arguments developed in those dialogues, it does not pervade the *Wars*, or define Procopius the man.

Might Procopius have been an architect or engineer? That is the supposition expounded by James Howard-Johnston.<sup>198</sup> Procopius has a demonstrable interest in architecture, water-works, and sieges. Based on these observations, Procopius' lack of literary credentials, and his somewhat limited knowledge, Howard-Johnston concludes that he was an architect or military engineer, and that is why he was appointed to Belisarius' staff. There are, however, some problems with this theory.<sup>199</sup>

Howard-Johnston argues that Procopius' focus on the building activities of Justinian in the *Buildings* betrays his true interests and background. This is because he thinks that Procopius' decision to fill an encomium with building works was unusual. Yet, Procopius is not unusual in this regard. Paul the Silentiary, for one,

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<sup>196</sup> Sheppard 2000: 837-852.

<sup>197</sup> See Procop. *SH*. 18.29, and *Pl. Ap.* 19B.

<sup>198</sup> Howard-Johnston 2000: 19-30, and in particular 24-30.

<sup>199</sup> Kelso (2003) says that both Procopius' and Ammianus' references to siege artillery are in fact part and parcel of classicizing history.

composed an encomium entirely devoted to Hagia Sophia.<sup>200</sup> Howard-Johnston bases his theory partly on his estimation of Procopius' literary credentials. Yet, Anthemius of Tralles, for example, the architect of Hagia Sophia, was also an author.<sup>201</sup> To be sure, architects and engineers were literate individuals, who would have had both a primary and secondary education.<sup>202</sup> Likewise, we argued above that Procopius was in fact well acquainted with the classics, only more deliberate in his use of references.<sup>203</sup>

As regards his interest in water-works, that can be explained by Procopius' disposition: he was an inquisitive fellow. In the manner of Herodotus, Procopius gives us a number of digressions covering a wide range of subjects. He displays an interest in Armenian history; the sibylline oracle; linguistics; Persian weaponry; volcanoes; fantastic locales such as, for example, Britain and Thule; ancient military communications, and in particular the use of trumpets; Latin etymology; silk; shipbuilding; and the *cursus publicus*, to name but a few examples.<sup>204</sup> Then there is the question of his focus on fortifications and their construction. This is, I think, a product of both his experiences, and his appreciation of Thucydides.<sup>205</sup> Both authors put considerable emphasis on sieges. Furthermore, and Thucydides aside, Procopius' interest must partially be a product of the type of warfare that was prevalent in his age. Sieges were part-and-parcel of warfare in the east in Late

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<sup>200</sup> Michael Whitby (pers. comm.) pointed out to me that a focus on buildings was not unusual. In regard to Paul the Silentiary's encomium, see Ma Whitby (1985).

<sup>201</sup> Browning 2000: 880. He wrote a treatise *On Unusual Devices*, and a lost treatise *On Burning-Mirrors*.

<sup>202</sup> Browning 2000: 880.

<sup>203</sup> The number of references and allusions used by sixth century authors varied considerably. See above pp 34-46.

<sup>204</sup> *Wars*: 1.5.35ff (Armenian history), 5.7.6ff (sibylline oracle), 5.18.6 (linguistics), 5.22.19 (Persian weaponry), 6.4.21-30 (volcanoes), 6.15.1-36 (Britain and Thule), 6.23.23-29 (trumpets), 8.5.13-14 (Latin etymology), 8.17.1-8 (silk), 8.22.9-16 (ship building).

*Secret History*: 30.1-8 (*cursus publicus*).

<sup>205</sup> As regards Procopius' relationship to Thucydides and sieges see Adshead (1990: 93-119).

Antiquity, more so than they had been during the principate, and Procopius was intimately acquainted with the realities of siege warfare.<sup>206</sup> In addition, his service on Belisarius' staff exposed him to a number of protracted sieges, particularly those in Italy. It is easy to imagine that he was called upon to participate in the defence of those cities. Indeed, he was sent to procure supplies when Belisarius and the Romans were besieged in Rome.<sup>207</sup> Thus, as regards Procopius' predilection for discussions of fortifications, we need look no further than his varied interests, and life experiences, to find an explanation.

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<sup>206</sup> During the late republic and Principate, the Roman armed forces usually sought to engage their foes in open battle. Most fortifications across the empire before the accession of Vespasian were made of perishable materials such as wood and turf. Indeed, in many parts of the empire, such as the lower Danube, it was not until well into the second century that permanent materials were used for the multifarious fortifications in the region. To be sure, this shows that the Romans, in most cases, used them as launching pads for offensive operations and not as theatres for combat (i.e., defensive structures).

<sup>207</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.4.1ff.

## **Chapter 2: How to Describe a Battle in Antiquity**

In the last chapter I looked at Procopius' personal background. Now I want to turn to his cultural background by looking at the historiographical, rhetorical, and theoretical tradition within which he operated, as well as a sample of battle descriptions from some of his contemporaries. How Procopius ordered his narrative, what he included and excluded, and how he explained the outcome were all conditioned by the chosen genre and its tradition, as well as the historical thought of his contemporaries.<sup>1</sup> His audience would have been drawn from among the elite, and they would have been well educated.<sup>2</sup> For Procopius' *Wars* to have been successful, which we know it was, both in the sixth century and the medieval period,<sup>3</sup> he would have had to have constructed his text in a language, and using a system of meaning, that his audience would have shared and understood.<sup>4</sup> Our author Procopius was trying to communicate with his audience by writing a history of events that he thought was important; he was also trying to persuade the implied reader that

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<sup>1</sup> The issue of genre is a complicated one, and one that has garnered much attention. In the early twentieth century Jacoby (1909) expounded in his famous, and pioneering, article the development of Greek historiography, or at least as he saw it. His views went unchallenged for nearly a century – Fornara (1983: 1-46) maintained them in his important overview of ancient historiography – until fairly recently. The five sub-genres of history outlined by Jacoby are mythography, ethnography, chronography, contemporary history, and horography. Marincola (1999), however, in an important critique of Jacoby's views, lays out five sensible new categories for classifying historical works: narrative or non-narrative; focalization; chronological limits; chronological arrangement; and subject matter. Although Marincola is primarily concerned with historiography from classical Athens through high imperial Rome, his categories could just as well have applied to late antique historiography. Indeed, as it turns out, the three widely accepted sub-genres of late antique historiography, secular or classicizing history, ecclesiastical history, and the chronicle, tacitly follow those categories. By the late sixth century secular and ecclesiastical histories started to converge, a development particularly evident in the works of Evagrius and Theophylact Simocatta, though they are not without precedent (Whitby 1992). Of these three sub-genres, the only to survive the seventh century is the chronicle, although other sorts of texts emerged to fill the void (Cameron 1992; Haldon 1997: 425-435). Cf. Mullett (1992) and Rosenmeyer (2006) on the vexed issue of genre in Byzantine and ancient literature.

<sup>2</sup> Though she is discussing an earlier period, Morgan's (1998: 223-234) discussion is salient.

<sup>3</sup> Kalli 2004: 162.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the pertinent comments of Rossi (2004: 10) in regard to the use of "narrative topoi".

his views were correct. When I turn to his text it will be important to bear these factors in mind. On the other hand, Procopius was not writing in a vacuum, and where Cameron and Kaldellis, while adopting different approaches, have sought to situate him in the sixth century intellectual milieu, I shall do the same, though I shall limit myself to the description of battle. Thus, this chapter is devoted to the means of describing battle in antiquity, at least as regards the literature,<sup>5</sup> with special attention paid to the historical and theoretical literature, so that when it is time for us to examine Procopius' descriptions of battle, we can read them, at least in part, in the same light that his contemporaries – his original audience, implied and actual – would have. I begin my discussion with rhetoric, and the rhetorical models of combat which formed a part of the broader east Roman curriculum. Then I provide an overview of ancient theories of historical writing, with a look at topics such as the arrangement of materials and the importance of veracity. Military theory occupies the last section of part A beginning with Homer. In part B I turn to some of Procopius' contemporaries, and near-contemporaries (that is sixth century), and their descriptions of battle, whether found in chronicles, ecclesiastical, secular history, or military handbook, and whether they were written in Greek or Latin.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> I am leaving out discussion of battles in the visual arts, and media such as frieze sculpture (Trajan's Column), book illumination (Vatican Virgil), and silverware (David plates).

<sup>6</sup> I am omitting the Syriac historians, such as Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, even though they could easily have been included.

**PART A: THEORY OF DESCRIBING BATTLE IN ANTIQUITY: RHETORIC,  
HISTORIOGRAPHY, MILITARY**

**I. Rhetoric**<sup>7</sup>

In the previous chapter we briefly looked at the role of rhetoric in ancient education; here I want to expand upon that, and look more closely at the role of rhetoric in historical composition. I argued above that Procopius himself would have had a rhetorical education. Rubin included it in his overview of his education.<sup>8</sup> Some time after that Beck claimed that Procopius' work betrays his familiarity with rhetoric,<sup>9</sup> while years later Roques used the works' rhetorical flavour to explore Procopius' historical pedigree.<sup>10</sup> By the thirteenth century Procopius was considered by some important Byzantine authors, such as Joseph Rhakendytes, as a model of rhetoric, a point worth bearing in mind.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, although Procopius' classification as a Byzantine historian is open to question, the importance of rhetoric in medieval Byzantium has long been recognized.<sup>12</sup> The same is largely true for ancient historiography, following from the work of Wiseman,<sup>13</sup> and later, Woodman.<sup>14</sup> There

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<sup>7</sup> From the start it should be clear that I do not hold to the derogatory view of rhetoric, with its supposed deleterious impact on later Greek writers, on which see the comments of Cameron (2006: 19). At the same time, I am using the word in its more technical sense, rather than in a more general sense, such as that employed by Booth (1961) and Cameron (1991: 13).

<sup>8</sup> Rubin 1957: 304-306. Cf. Kouroumalis (2005: 84-91, 102-106), who also devotes considerable space to rhetoric in antiquity and its relation to Procopius' text.

<sup>9</sup> Beck 1986: 18.

<sup>10</sup> Roques 2000a.

<sup>11</sup> Kalli 2004: 161-162.

<sup>12</sup> Ljubarskij (1998: 11) does not classify Procopius as a Byzantine historian, nor Agathias or Theophylact for that matter. For him it is better to call them late classical. On the issue of rhetoric in Byzantine literature see Hunger (1981). He discusses various aspects of Byzantine rhetoric in his encyclopaedic *Die Hochsprachliche Profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, devoting 131 pages in volume 1 to it (1978: 65-196). On the origins of rhetoric, and its later importance for Byzantine society, see Hunger (1978: I, 65-74). Similar views are held for the ancient world (Morgan 1998: 190).

<sup>13</sup> Wiseman 1979: 29-40.

<sup>14</sup> Woodman 1988 (cf. *ibid.* 2007: 142-143). Marincola (1997: 13), for example, in his masterly *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography*, states that historiography was a

is a broad consensus that rhetoric had an important role not only in ancient and Medieval Greek society, but also in literary composition. Despite a curtailing in freedom of speech, at least in relation to classical Athens and Republican Rome, orations, whether public or private, were still quite common in late antiquity,<sup>15</sup> and though rhetoric's greatest impact was probably felt in the realm of literature,<sup>16</sup> its importance in late antique society at large should not be overlooked.<sup>17</sup> In sum rhetoric was important, and many have argued that not only Procopius, but the works of other ancient historians, were shaped by rhetoric. In this section I am going to focus on the *progymnasmata* as they formed a fundamental part of the ancient rhetorical curriculum, they provided the student with the tools needed to compose a literary work, including a history,<sup>18</sup> and whether we accept that Procopius completed his rhetorical education or not, there can be little doubt that he would have studied these rhetorical exercises in detail.

One of the key features of rhetorical education was the imitation of models; not only would students read selections from a range of different authors, at first primarily those from poets, and later from prose as well, but they would also strive to recreate them, in some form or other, not only as regards their structure and style, but also their language.<sup>19</sup> Whereas in the primary and secondary stages of education the pupil's learning was primarily passive, in this tertiary phase his

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branch of rhetoric in the ancient world. Not all students of ancient historiography, however, have been convinced of rhetoric's role, largely because of a negative understanding of its usage. Noteworthy in this regard is Momigliano (1984) who, in a discussion of Hayden White's (1981; cf. 1987) theories of narrativity, argued against the extensive use of rhetorical devices by ancient historians. Cf. Laird 2006: 6; Nicolai 2007: 19-23.

<sup>15</sup> Russell 1998: 17; Cameron 1991: 80-84; Flusin 2004: 167.

<sup>16</sup> Gibson 2004: 104.

<sup>17</sup> Kennedy (1983: 52-53) notes that the primary goal of rhetorical education in late antiquity was "skill in literary composition". Brown (1992: 42) and Flusin (2004: 266) also stress rhetoric's importance in late antiquity.

<sup>18</sup> Pernot 2005: 150. cf. Heath 2004: 277-331.

<sup>19</sup> Criboire 2001: 225; Too 2001: 290. cf. Heath 2004: 216-221.



participation was active.<sup>20</sup> The *progymnasmata*, which are the focus of this discussion, formed the backbone of the pupil's training in literary education.<sup>21</sup> Four such textbooks survive from antiquity: those attributed to Aelius Theon, Pseudo-Hermogenes, Aphthonius, and Nicolaus.<sup>22</sup> The *progymnasmata* of Pseudo-Hermogenes and Aphthonius are thought to have been the most popular by the sixth century, though these surviving works have much in common, and as such the views raised on all four deserve discussion; moreover, when modern scholars denigrate ancient battle descriptions, they often do so with implicit reference to the stock features contained in these handbooks.<sup>23</sup>

All four theorists include a list of suitable exercises, possibly in the order in which they were to be done, though certainly in increasing order of complexity.<sup>24</sup> The latter three *progymnasmata* include twelve (Pseudo-Hermogenes), fourteen (Aphthonius), and thirteen exercises (Nicolaus) respectively, while Aelius Theon's included ten; it should be noted that by the time Pseudo-Hermogenes is believed to have been writing,<sup>25</sup> the practice of composing handbooks with preliminary exercises had achieved something of a consensus, and so Aelius Theon's diverges the most. Indeed, in his treatise Aelius Theon provides a comprehensive introduction to his text, in which he discusses the value of the approach which he adapts, as well as a discussion of pedagogy. While discussing the value of the exercises Aelius notes: "training in exercises is absolutely useful not only to those who are going to practise rhetoric but also if one wishes to undertake the function of poets or historians or any

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<sup>20</sup> Morgan 1998: 198.

<sup>21</sup> Kennedy 1983: 53; Gibson 2004: 104; Pernot 2005: 197-199.

<sup>22</sup> For an overview of these four authors and their works see Kennedy (1983: 56-69).

<sup>23</sup> Shaw 1999: 133; Rossi 2004: 9.

<sup>24</sup> Morgan 1998: 191.

<sup>25</sup> On the author and date of this work see Patillon (2008: 165-170).

other writers.”<sup>26</sup> Among the exercises illustrated by the rhetoricians the two that are most relevant to historiography are narrative (*diegema*) and *ekphrasis*, or description. Also of note is the *ethopoeia*, or *prosopopoeia*, which involved the writing of a speech for a given character in a given situation.<sup>27</sup> In the respective authors’ hierarchies of exercises these three elements come in the same relative order, with the narrative coming first and the *ethopoeia* second, just before the *ekphrasis*; the implication of their arrangement is that the latter is the most complex.

Beginning with narrative, the main concern for all four authors is the definition, characteristics, and classification of narrative. All four state that a narrative is the exposition (ἔκθεσις) of something that has happened, or as though it had happened.<sup>28</sup> While discussing narrative, style is a particular concern of the rhetoricians, and in that regard, Aelius Theon, Aphthonius, and Nicolaus lay out a narrative’s characteristics, while Pseudo-Hermogenes avoids them. For Aelius Theon the three most important characteristics of a narrative are clarity, conciseness, and credibility. Aphthonius says that the most important characteristics of a narrative are clarity, brevity, persuasiveness, and, interestingly, what he calls Hellenism (ἑλληνισμός).<sup>29</sup> On the other hand Nicolaus gives five, brevity, clarity, persuasiveness, charm, and grandeur, with, like Aphthonius, Hellenism (ἑλληνισμός)

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<sup>26</sup> Aelius Theon, Spengel p. 70, trans. Kennedy.

<sup>27</sup> This particular exercise reminds us of Thucydides’ famous comments about how he constructs his speeches (Thuc. 1.22.1). I will not be going over the respective rhetoricians’ discussions of speeches, as they are in broad agreement on what is said.

<sup>28</sup> Aelius Theon, Spengel p. 78; Pseudo-Hermogenes 2.1; Aphthonius 2.1; Nicolaus, Felten p. 11.

<sup>29</sup> Aphthonius 2.4. Kennedy (1983: 61) calls the last virtue, what I have deemed Hellenism, “purity of language”. In the context this supposition seems to be entirely plausible, though his designation is not completely certain. Aphthonius is believed to have been writing in the late fourth century (Patillon 2008: 49-52), and Nicolaus, who also mentions the word, not much later (fifth century), both well after the Second Sophistic, though much of the purism advocated by those who lived through it, such as Plutarch, Arrian, Lucian, and Dio, maintained its legitimacy among Greek writers for centuries to come. On the practice of linguistic purism during the Second Sophistic see Swain (1996: 43-64); on Hellenism through the fourth century, especially in regard to its relationship to the rise of Christianity, Kaldellis (2007a: 120-172). Cf. Brown (1992: 43ff), on a rhetorical education and “verbal decorum”.

tacked on to the end.<sup>30</sup> Pseudo-Hermogenes, Aphthonius, and Nicolaus disagree on how many types of narrative there are. For Pseudo-Hermogenes there are four types of narrative, the mythical, the fictitious or dramatic, the historical, and the political or private;<sup>31</sup> for Aphthonius there are three, namely the dramatic, historic, and political.<sup>32</sup> Nicolaus' account betrays the hallmarks of a compiler, for he classifies narrative into both three categories, descriptive, dramatic, or mixed, and four categories, mythical, historical, pragmatic (or judicial), and fictitious.<sup>33</sup> Over the course of their respective discussions the four authors often have recourse to examples from Greek literature. Theon's treatment of narrative is much longer, and more detailed, than those of his predecessors. The bulk of the examples that he uses come from Greek historians such as Herodotus, Thucydides, and Theopompus, though Homer too frequents the discussion.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, while discussing the topic he devotes considerable attention to the narrative technique and style of Thucydides, at one point chastising it,<sup>35</sup> at another praising it.<sup>36</sup> Both Pseudo-Hermogenes' and Aphthonius' discussions are quite brief, though the former names Homer, Herodotus, and Thucydides. Nicolaus also names those three authors. In sum, of the three topics that I have highlighted, it is the narrative that the rhetoricians associate most with history, with Aelius Theon saying, significantly, that "historical writing is nothing other than a combination of narrations".<sup>37</sup>

Although narrative is understood as the most important part of historical writing, it is the *ekphrasis* that is most relevant when discussing battle in

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<sup>30</sup> Nicolaus, Felten p 14.

<sup>31</sup> Ps. Herm. 2.3.

<sup>32</sup> Aphthonius 2.2.

<sup>33</sup> Nicolaus, Felten p. 12.

<sup>34</sup> Aelius Theon treats fewer subjects than his three successors; he also discusses them in more detail.

<sup>35</sup> Aelius Theon, Spengel p. 80.

<sup>36</sup> Aelius Theon, Spengel pp. 84-85.

<sup>37</sup> Aelius Theon, Spengel, p. 60, trans. Kennedy. Cf. Gibson 2004: 118.

historiography.<sup>38</sup> By late antiquity *ekphrases* had emerged as something of a genre in and of itself, as evidenced by Paul the Silentiary's description of Hagia Sophia; however, they were still incorporated in larger works, such as letters, sermons, and histories.<sup>39</sup> Getting back to our rhetorical handbooks, Aelius Theon notes that *ekphrases* are frequently used by historians.<sup>40</sup> Pseudo-Hermogenes and Aphthonius, while discussing *ekphraseis*, draw the bulk of their examples from Thucydides, while Aelius Theon, as with narrative, draws his examples from Homer, Herodotus and Thucydides. The point, of course, is that these rhetoricians all recognize the place that an *ekphrasis* has in Greek historiography. For all four, the definition of an *ekphrasis* is bringing what is shown before the eyes.<sup>41</sup> *Ekphrasis* tends to be more expressive than narrative, and to be concerned with parts of things, rather than as a whole like a narrative, or so Nicolaus.<sup>42</sup> Aelius Theon says that *ekphrasis* is somewhat similar to *topos*, or commonplace.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, Pseudo-Hermogenes notes similarities with both narrative and *topos*, though also encomium.<sup>44</sup> Only Aelius Theon and Pseudo-Hermogenes give us the virtues of an *ekphrasis*, with both conceding that they are clarity and vividness.<sup>45</sup> There is broad agreement over what sorts of things constitute an *ekphrasis*. Indeed, the list of types of things that could be described was quite extensive, with the general categories being events, persons, places, and things. Most significant for us is that the first

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<sup>38</sup> It should be noted that the manuscript of Nicolaus breaks off before we get to *ekphrasis*, and so the treatment of *ekphrasis* that we have, and that I am using, is based on Felten's reconstruction drawn from "composite commentaries" (Kennedy 2003: 162). With this in mind, I shall limit my use of Nicolaus, though it is worth bearing in mind that whoever wrote what we are including under *ekphrasis* is in general agreement with the other three rhetoricians.

<sup>39</sup> Maguire 1998: 113. On Paul the Silentiary and Hagia Sophia see Ma Whitby (1985).

<sup>40</sup> Aelius Theon, Spengel p. 60.

<sup>41</sup> Aelius Theon, Spengel p. 118; Pseudo-Hermogenes 10.1; Aphthonius 12.1; Nicolaus, Felten p. 68.

<sup>42</sup> Nicolaus, Felten p. 68.

<sup>43</sup> Aelius Theon, Spengel p. 119.

<sup>44</sup> Pseudo-Hermogenes 10.7.

<sup>45</sup> Aelius Theon, Spengel p. 119; Pseudo-Hermogenes 10.6.

three rhetoricians include war, battle, and the construction of siege engines, ships, and weapons of war, as suitable subject matter for an *ekphrasis*,<sup>46</sup> and it is because of this that most ancient descriptions of battle are denigrated.<sup>47</sup> What is more, an *ekphrasis* need not be on only one of these things, for they can also be mixed, and the example provided by Aphthonius is the night-battle at Syracuse described by Thucydides.<sup>48</sup> What exactly do the rhetoricians suggest an orator or historian include in a description of a war or battle? While discussing the education of the young, Aelius Theon simply refers to Thucydides' descriptions of the siege of Plataea, and various cavalry and naval battles, without identifying the features.<sup>49</sup> When he turns to the subject of *ekphrasis* he again singles out the Plataean siege, as well as the making of Achilles' arms from Homer, and the preparation of a siege engine from Thucydides.<sup>50</sup> It is Aelius Theon alone who singles out the siege of Plataea, while the night battles at Syracuse are mentioned by Aelius Theon, Pseudo-Hermogenes, and Aphthonius alike, as examples of an *ekphrasis*.<sup>51</sup> A little later he says: "in an *ekphrasis* of war we shall first recount events before the war: the raising of armies, expenditures, fears, the countryside devastated, the sieges; then describe the wounds and the deaths and the grief, and in addition the capture and enslavement of

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<sup>46</sup> Aelius Theon, Spengel p. 118; Pseudo-Hermogenes 10.2; Aphthonius 12.1. The reconstructed text of Nicolaus is the only one to give only a passing reference to war, which could be the result of its context (medieval Byzantine). Indeed, *ekphrases* of works of art attract the writer's attention (Nicolaus, Felten p. 69). The fourth century orator Themistius, who had a full training in rhetoric, says that Homer and Thucydides are models for writing about war (*Oration* 15). By the medieval Byzantine period, besides becoming a model for rhetoric, Procopius (and to a lesser degree Agathias) had become a model for describing battle, at least for the historians Leo the Deacon and John Kinnamos. Cf. Brand 1976: 7; Russell 1998: 40; Kelso 2003; Kalli 2004: 161-162; Talbot & Sullivan 2005: 23.

<sup>47</sup> Not everyone, of course, has read the use of battle conventions as signs of literary sterility. Paul (1982) and Rossi (2004), for example, argue the contrary. Indeed, as regards the *ekphrasis* Fowler (1991: 30) says "the signs [in both art and literature] are read according to systems of meaning that are cultural constructs".

<sup>48</sup> Aphthonius 12.2; Thuc. 7.43-44. cf. Pseudo-Hermogenes 10.3.

<sup>49</sup> Aelius Theon, Spengel p. 68.

<sup>50</sup> Aelius Theon, Spengel p. 118. cf. Hom. *Il.* 18.478-614; Thuc. 3.21, 4.100.

<sup>51</sup> Pseudo-Hermogenes 10.3; Aphthonius 12.2.

some and the victory and trophies of the others”.<sup>52</sup> Pseudo-Hermogenes gives a similar account.<sup>53</sup> As with the earlier references to the siege of Plataea and Achilles’ shield, this passage, whether the version of Aelius Theon or Pseudo-Hermogenes, reads as an outline of a composite battle drawn, almost entirely, from Homer and Thucydides. If there is one thing that the *progymnasmata* have in common in this regard, it is that Thucydides serves as an exemplary model for describing battle, and sieges in particular are highlighted. At the same time, Homer left an impression. What these discussions do not do, however, is give much detail about what exactly it is from the respective *ekphraseis* in Thucydides that are so exemplary. Aelius Theon and Pseudo-Hermogenes may both give an outline of what is to be included in war and battle, but that is all it is: an outline. In sum, for these rhetoricians a battle is considered a potential *ekphrasis*. On the other hand, what exactly is to be included in such a description, is left open, for all that we have is a few general comments coupled with some Thucydidean references.

This overview of rhetoric, and more specifically, the *progymnasmata*, has highlighted those elements deemed to be most relevant to a would-be historian. All classicizing late antique historians, and their readers, would have had similar training, and they are all likely to have been familiar with the points expressed in these handbooks, whether they worked through one of those mentioned here, or

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<sup>52</sup> Aelius Theon, Spengel p. 119, trans. Kennedy.

<sup>53</sup> Pseudo-Hermogenes 10.4: “if we are speaking of an *ekphrasis* of a war, first we shall mention events before the war: recruiting the soldiers, the expenditures, the fears; then the attacks, the slaughter, the deaths; then the victory trophies; then the paeans of the victors and the others’ tears and slavery” (trans. Kennedy). Rossi (2004: 9), in an otherwise excellent introduction to her provocative book, mistranslates τὰς στρατολογίας as “the generals’ speeches”, when it should read “the levying of troops”. The point is significant, for Agathias, who I believe had a more complete rhetorical training than Procopius, and subsequently, relied more heavily on his rhetorical background in his work, generally avoids pre-battle speeches before describing a battle, though he will report the levying of troops. Cf. Agathias 2.4.1-2.6.6, the preliminaries to the Battle of Casilinum, one of the most detailed battle descriptions in the *Histories*, where extensive preparations are recorded, including the levying of troops, though only a couple of lines are devoted to exhortations (2.5.1).

some other that is no longer extant. Narrative and *ekphrasis* are the two topics most appropriate for my discussion of descriptions of battle in the *Wars*. Like the classical texts that they occasionally refer to, these *progymnasmata* often give quite precise references, without providing explication (Plataea), the implication being that the student would be familiar enough with the passage in question such that it was not needed.<sup>54</sup> I now turn to historiographical theory.

## **II. The Essentials of Historiography**<sup>55</sup>

Procopius' work is a classicizing history, and as such, it was bound, at least to some degree, by a number of conventions like battles, ethnographic digressions, geographical discussion, political narrative, and speeches.<sup>56</sup> Over hundreds of years Greek authors developed a standard, and relatively static, set of criteria for the would-be historian.<sup>57</sup> Most historians stress the importance of experience in writing history even if they themselves had limited familiarity with their subjects. Polybius, for example, rails against Timaeus' ignorance about the many places that he

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<sup>54</sup> Criboire 2001: 225; Pernot 2005: 150.

<sup>55</sup> Moles (1993: 88) said that the four principal extant writers on ancient historiographical theory are Polybius, Cicero, Dionysius, and Plutarch. To that list should be added Lucian. Cf. the extended discussion of Fornara (1983: 91-141), as well as the overview of Potter (1999: 5-19).

<sup>56</sup> That is not to suggest, however, that using this conceptual framework was in any way limiting; in this regard I am very much in agreement with Kaldellis (2004). Indeed, I intend to show over the course of this study that Procopius' decision to write a 'classicizing history' in no way restricted the variety of his descriptions, and depth of explanation, and that it did not obscure the realities of war any more than a modern film might. On the other hand, our problem with the means that Procopius, and his fellow historians, explained his work might be due to a different view on the importance of explanation in a history. Pelling's (1999: 348) comments are worth bearing in mind: "Perhaps, indeed, we concentrate too much on causal explanation, central to our modern western historical explanations but not always so primary in the ancient world."

<sup>57</sup> There was some dispute among historians and theoreticians about what should and should not be included in an historical work. There was a consensus for most issues (such as the importance of truth which I shall turn to below), although some were still open to debate. Dionysius of Halicarnasus (*On Thucydides*) and Plutarch (*On the Malice of Herodotus*) looked at the same parts of Herodotus' narrative, and Dionysius was positive towards Herodotus, while Plutarch was not. Plutarch, of course, was hostile towards Herodotus because he presents his fellow Thebans as medizers.

describes, such as Africa.<sup>58</sup> Historians must also pick a subject that is worth discussing; for Dionysius this was the first task of an historian. As a result, every historian stresses the importance of their subject and the need for the deeds to be preserved for all time, or something similar.<sup>59</sup> Herodian, for instance, says, "...such similar succession of reigns, variety of foreign wars, disturbances among the provincial populations, and destruction of cities in [both] Roman territory [etc.]... were rarely if ever recorded before."<sup>60</sup> Historians must also be free from prejudice,<sup>61</sup> and have noble aims in composing their history – in other words, panegyric was unacceptable, as Lucian points out.<sup>62</sup> Generally, this was only possible when an historian had the freedom to speak his mind;<sup>63</sup> if he did not, then the historian could be open to charges of malice, as Plutarch makes plain early in his treatise on Herodotus.<sup>64</sup>

Perhaps the most important criterion identified for any would-be historian is adherence to the truth.<sup>65</sup> In other words, an historical work must describe things "as they happened".<sup>66</sup> This conviction is found among both classical and classicizing historians from Herodotus to Theophylact Simocatta.<sup>67</sup> Thucydides, Dionysius,

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<sup>58</sup> Polyb. 12.3.2ff. Procopius (*Wars* 1.1.3) was well qualified in this regard, having accompanied Belisarius to the Eastern frontier, North Africa, and Italy.

<sup>59</sup> Ultimately, like much else, this predilection goes back to Homer.

<sup>60</sup> Herod. 1.1.4, trans. Whittaker. Procopius, of course, stresses the same thing – and rightfully so – for his subject matter, the wars of Justinian. Cf. Procop. *Wars* 1.1.6.

<sup>61</sup> This is one of the chief charges hurled at Timaeus by Polybius (12.7.1).

<sup>62</sup> Lucian, *Hist. conscr.* 10.

<sup>63</sup> Some modern historians, including Honoré (1978) and Kaldellis (2004), believe that conditions during the reign of Justinian were not especially conducive to freedom of expression. Procopius' scathing invective in the *Secret History* would seem to support such a claim.

<sup>64</sup> Somewhat surprisingly, Plutarch makes the point about historians in general (Plut. *On Malice* 856B).

<sup>65</sup> See Potter 1999: 12-18, 144-150 (on verisimilitude).

<sup>66</sup> See too Aristotle (*Poet.* 1451a ff.) who says that, "the difference is that one [history] tells of what has happened, the other [poetry] of the kinds of things that might happen" (*Poet.* 1451b, trans. Murray & Dorsch).

<sup>67</sup> I accept Blockley's (Blockley 2003: 291) pronouncement that there was no unbroken historical tradition in Greek historiography from Herodotus to Theophylact, and I would also



Josephus, Plutarch, Lucian, and Herodian all stress the importance of truth in their work. Procopius is no exception: “He [Procopius] believed that while cleverness was appropriate for rhetoric, story-making was appropriate for poetry, and truth for history”.<sup>68</sup> Some historians, however, are a little less than straightforward in regard to the status of ‘truth’ in their accounts. Herodotus, for one, is a bit more liberal in his presentation of ‘factual’ and ‘fictional’ evidence.<sup>69</sup> Polybius, on the other hand, put truth on a pedestal: in his vehement attacks on his predecessors and contemporaries he refers over and over to the importance of truth in history. In fact, he goes so far as to say that history without truth is nothing.<sup>70</sup> And yet Polybius, this most ardent of proponents for truth in historiography, identifies another important amendment to the importance of truth: if an historian errs in his reporting of events, it is acceptable, so long as he has not done so through prejudice or ill intent.<sup>71</sup> It is difficult to understate the importance that historians placed on truth; it is something we should bear in mind when we turn to Procopius’ text.<sup>72</sup>

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agree that there is much in common between classicizing and ecclesiastical historians in the fifth century (AD). Yet, the distinction is appropriate given the similarities with their predecessors. Cf. Scott 1981.

<sup>68</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.1.4.

<sup>69</sup> “So much for what Persians and Phoenicians say; and I have no intention of passing judgement on its truth or falsity. I prefer to rely on my own knowledge, and to point out who it was in actual fact that first injured the Greeks; then I will proceed with my history” (Hdt. 1.5, trans. De Sélincourt and Marincola).

<sup>70</sup> Polyb. 1.14.6. Cf. Polyb. 2.56.11-12,

<sup>71</sup> See Plutarch (*On the Malice of Herodotus*), who bases much of his criticism of Herodotus on the allegation that he was unduly biased against the Greeks in favour of the barbarians, which resulted in – at least for Plutarch – some erroneous statements. This sort of error in the eyes of Polybius is the worst crime that an historian could commit (Polyb. 12.12.4-5).

<sup>72</sup> Later Byzantine historians had this same conviction. See, for example, the preface to Anna Komnene’s *Alexiad* in which she expresses ‘concern’ lest her readers deem that her history is “...wholly false and mere panegyric” (trans. Sewter). Anna’s preface in fact includes many of the traits that we have outlined above. Whether or not this tendency to imitate the prefaces of earlier Greek historians among later Byzantine historians was little more than mere literary affectation is an issue beyond the scope of this essay (see Kaldellis 1999b for some comments about this in regard to the work/s of Michael Psellus). Suffice to say, I suspect that it was more than mere imitation. Cf. Hunger 1969/1970; Scott 1981; Holmes 2005: 172-202.

Another trait that shows up time and again in discussions of historiographical practice is the arrangement of the text. In his letter to Gnaeus Pompeius (Pompey) in which he lays out the five most important tasks of an historian, Dionysius puts considerable stress on the construction of the narrative. The second of those tasks is to pick an appropriate place to begin and end the narrative; the third is to determine what material to include and what material to omit in an historical narrative; and the fourth is to arrange the material properly and to put each point in its proper place. In fact, it is significant deficiencies in some of these areas that leads Dionysius to censure Thucydides;<sup>73</sup> he was not the only ancient or Byzantine critic to highlight Thucydides' arrangement.<sup>74</sup> Plutarch, in his *On the Malice of Herodotus*, stresses some of the same issues. He allows that some omission is permissible, so as long as nothing that deserves a place in the narrative is left out. Herodotus seems to have got this wrong, or, so Plutarch when he describes him as "omitting the good and failing to omit the bad".<sup>75</sup> Lucian's discussion of the same issues is perhaps the most colourful for he likens an historian to a sculptor, such as Praxiteles, whose job it is to take the medium, which in this case is 'the facts', and

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<sup>73</sup> As regards the second task Dionysius says: "It would have been better, after describing all the events of the war, to end his [Thucydides'] history with a climax..." (trans. Usher). As regards the third task: "Thucydides, on the other hand, hurtles breathlessly through an extended description of a single war, stringing together battle after battle, armament after armament and speech after speech", thereby implying that Thucydides was not selective enough when writing his history. Finally, as regards the fourth task Dionysius says: "Thucydides keeps close to the chronological order...[and as a result] is obscure and hard to follow, for since many events occur in different places in the course of the same summer and winter, he leaves his account of earlier events half-finished and embarks upon others (trans. Usher)". Dionysius essentially expands upon these points in his *On Thucydides*. It might be that it was concern over criticisms of these sorts that led Procopius to organize his *Wars* by theatre.

<sup>74</sup> As we saw above p 63, n. 35, Aelius Theon, the second century writer on rhetoric, criticizes Thucydides' style and arrangement on a few occasions. Tzetzes, a twelfth century commentator on Thucydides, struggled with Thucydides' language (as many before and after him have), and as a response says that an historian should do the following: "Now hear the best method of writing a history:| Be grave and be clear, be persuasive and bland,| Be fierce when it's needed, and sometimes expand" (trans. Standford). On the other hand, some modern commentators, such as Hornblower (1994a, 1994b), have praised his selection. Cf. Scott 1981: 61.

<sup>75</sup> Plut. *On Malice* 858B, trans. Pearson and Sandbach.

'glue' them together, 'polish' them, and 'align' them.<sup>76</sup> But, this is not to belittle the task for he says: "as to the facts themselves, he should not assemble them at random, but only after much laborious and painstaking investigation".<sup>77</sup> Even Polybius, that bastion of historicity, acknowledges that more goes into history than mere reporting of the facts, for he condemns Phylarchus because, "in general this author reports many things throughout his whole work without plan or purpose and seemingly at random."<sup>78</sup> Thus, it is not enough for an historian to report the truth and to describe things as they really were in his narrative; he must also assemble the facts in a meaningful way, paying careful attention to the construction and shape of the entire narrative.<sup>79</sup>

The last feature I want to discuss is the role of the individual.<sup>80</sup> Most historians emphasize the importance of the individual, and some to the point where the respective work is very much the history of one man.<sup>81</sup> Xenophon's *Anabasis* is focused on the escape from Persia of a group of Greek mercenaries, though Xenophon himself is quite central. Arrian was undoubtedly influenced by

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<sup>76</sup> Lucian, *Hist. conscr.* 50.

<sup>77</sup> *Hist. conscr.* 47, trans. Kilburn.

<sup>78</sup> Polyb. 2.56.3, trans. Paton.

<sup>79</sup> It is because of this ancient stress on the literary quality of historiography that the application of modern literary theory, especially narratology, is entirely justifiable. Indeed, ancient historians and theoreticians would have been perplexed by many modern historians' fascination with scientific objectivity in historiography, and our failure to treat many of their ancient works as works of literature. In this light, the works of scholars such as Haydn White, John Marincola, Tim Rood, and Chris Pelling are especially welcome, and valuable.

<sup>80</sup> Later ecclesiastical historians were also quite interested in individuals, and like their secular predecessors, major political leaders (emperors, and arguably, bishops), and generals. In the last two books of his *Ecclesiastical History* Evagrius devotes considerable space to espousing the merits of a number of Roman generals. Although those personages highlighted by Evagrius would have had no part in determining the outcome of the events he describes – for that was left to God – they were important for demonstrating, at least in part, how God worked.

<sup>81</sup> Although some historians may have focused their works on individuals, that does not mean that they would necessarily have excluded other relevant details, such as the actions of other important personages, and historiographical components such as speeches, and ethnographic and geographic digressions. Thus, works such as Xenophon's *Anabasis* and Arrian's *Anabasis of Alexander* should still be considered, strictly speaking, histories, rather than biographies. I would say the same about Tacitus' *Agricola*.

Xenophon's work when he sat down to write his own *Anabasis*.<sup>82</sup> But, whereas Xenophon does not explicitly base his narrative on his own achievements, Arrian centres his work on Alexander the Great; it is not simply the *Anabasis*, but the *Anabasis of Alexander*.<sup>83</sup> In his letter to Lucceius Cicero does not explicitly claim that an historical work should be focused on one man, though he does note that the history of a particular period can be made more interesting by focusing on an individual: "Which of us is not affected pleasurably, along with a sentiment of compassion, at the story of the dying Epaminondas on the field of Mantinea?"<sup>84</sup> A little later Cicero adds: "But in the doubtful and various fortunes of an outstanding individual we often find surprise and suspense, joy and distress, hope and fear; and if they are rounded off by a notable conclusion, our minds as we read are filled with the liveliest gratification."<sup>85</sup> Indeed, Cicero is trying to persuade Lucceius that his forthcoming history of the period can be made more interesting by focusing on the changes in his own circumstances (Cicero's). The individual clearly has an important role to play, particularly in terms of historical causation, for it is often the choices of one man that determine what will follow. Now that we have illustrated the general

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<sup>82</sup> Of course, Xenophon's *Anabasis* should be considered a primary source, because it is a contemporary account, while Arrian's is a secondary source.

<sup>83</sup> Both works are in seven books. Procopius was also influenced by Xenophon, and perhaps had also read Arrian. Given that the *Wars* is very much focused on Belisarius, even though it is the *History of the Wars of Justinian*, I wonder to what extent Procopius had originally conceived of the work as something of an *Anabasis of Belisarius*. The work was first published in seven books much like the works of Xenophon and Arrian; moreover, the *Wars* tells the story of three different sets of expeditions, and Belisarius has a prominent role in all, something which he does not have in the eighth book. Evagrius, for instance, in one of his first explicit references to Procopius says the following: "It has been written by Procopius the *rhetor* in composing his history concerning Belisarius" (4.12, trans. Whitby). George Kedrenos too describes Procopius' work as an account of the stratagems of Belisarius (Geo. Cedrenus, *Hist.* 1.649). cf. Pazdernik (2006) for some connections between Procopius' *Wars* and Xenophon's *Hellenica*.

<sup>84</sup> Cic. *Fam.* 22.5, trans. Bailey.

<sup>85</sup> Cic. *Fam.* 22.5, trans. Bailey. Another interesting point about this statement is that Cicero is stressing the entertainment aspect of history. For some, history was to not only report the truth, and provide lessons for the future, but also to entertain the reader (or in some cases, the listener).

framework of a work of Greek historiography, it is time to turn to the specifics of military matters.

### **Battles and Historiography**

A small number of authors discuss the description of battle, and their comments suggest that opinion on the matter varied. The four writers that I shall focus on in this discussion are Polybius, Dionysius, Plutarch, and Lucian.<sup>86</sup> I begin with Polybius' analysis of Callisthenes' description of the Battle of Issus.<sup>87</sup> Polybius' analysis is focused on technical matters pertaining to warfare. Early on it becomes evident that his criticisms are based on his military background.<sup>88</sup> One of the first faults that Callisthenes is charged with is confusion. Polybius' analysis is based on his own military experience, as well as his evaluation of Alexander's generalship; Polybius finds parts of Callisthenes' description of Darius' order of battle hard to follow.<sup>89</sup> Polybius is also concerned with Callisthenes' forgetfulness,<sup>90</sup> and his use of numbers, whether they apply to distances or casualties.<sup>91</sup> Polybius finds Callisthenes' account of Alexander's advance particularly irksome, and his first point is that the topography of the battlefield does not fit with the alleged number of troops at Alexander's disposal.<sup>92</sup> Polybius feels that Alexander would never have put

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<sup>86</sup> See Swain (1996: 298-329) for the relevant bibliography on Lucian, and Plutarch (1996: 135-186), Hurst (1982) for Dionysius, and Champion (2004) for an interesting recent monograph on Polybius.

<sup>87</sup> Walbank (1967: 364) in his commentary on Polybius, feels that in this place Polybius is at his worst. Bosworth (1980: 199), in his commentary on Arrian – who also discusses the Battle of Issus as we shall see – calls the criticisms petty and superficial. Their complaints rest on Polybius' tendency to pick on technical minutiae, which mean little to the overall description. Walbank (1967: 364-376) and Bosworth (1980: 198-219) discuss Polybius' and Arrian's respective accounts of the battle in detail.

<sup>88</sup> Polybius saw combat from Greece to North Africa.

<sup>89</sup> Polyb. 12.18.8ff. He alleges that Callisthenes has made Darius perform an action that is unnecessary given his reported position in the line. Cf. Polyb. 12.18.10.

<sup>90</sup> Polyb. 12.18.12. Cf. Walbank 1967: 371.

<sup>91</sup> Polyb. 12.19.1ff. Cf. Walbank 1967: 371-372.

<sup>92</sup> Polyb. 12.20.1ff.

himself at such a disadvantage.<sup>93</sup> Polybius then tells us what he thinks would have been the most likely formation/s required given the numbers and the conditions. So, for example, Polybius asserts that “it would, therefore, have been considerably better to form a proper double or quadruple phalanx, for which it was not impossible to find marching room and which it would have been quite easy to get into order of battle expeditiously enough, as his scouts informed him in good time, warning him of the approach of the enemy.”<sup>94</sup> Polybius then turns to the greatest problem with Callisthenes’ account: the length of Alexander’s line.<sup>95</sup> Polybius then notes some similar examples of “Callisthenes’ blunders”, and claims that there are too many to mention; as such, before concluding this digression (on Callisthenes) he highlights a couple of further so-called absurdities in the narrative, including a single combat between Alexander and Darius.<sup>96</sup> What is significant here, at least for our purposes, is that Polybius has no problem with the plausibility of such a duel but rather how they attempted to intimate their intentions to fight each other in person, given their place in the battle at large. With a brief reference to an alleged crossing of a river with the phalanx, Polybius’ digression draws to a close.

Modern criticisms of Polybius’ attack on Callisthenes are valid. But Polybius’ main points of departure from Callisthenes’ narrative, which all centre on Polybius’ understanding of how a battle works, and what is involved in the fighting itself, are

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<sup>93</sup> “And what can be less prepared than a phalanx advancing in line but broken and disunited?” Polyb. 12.20.6, trans. Paton. Cf. Walbank 1967: 374.

<sup>94</sup> Polyb. 12.20.7, trans. Paton.

<sup>95</sup> Somewhat significantly, as we shall see below, Polybius makes a reference to Homer here in regard to the compactness of the formation. He qualifies this criticism with the following lines: “Add to this that the whole line must have kept at a considerable distance from the mountains so as not to be exposed to attack by those of the enemy who held the foothills. We know that he made a crescent formation to oppose the latter.” Polyb. 12.22.5-6, trans. Paton (slightly modified). Walbank’s comments (1967: 375): “Paton, ‘in a crescent formation’, is misleading”, are slightly pedantic for his suggestion, “troops stationed at an angle to the main line, in this case an angle backwards”, essentially describes the same thing, at least in this instance.

<sup>96</sup> Polyb. 12.22.2.

important for this discussion; Polybius is most rancorous when Callisthenes is describing the formation of Darius' or Alexander' armies, and their employment. He is not concerned with what points to emphasize in the narrative, or necessarily their chronological order, but rather whether his military discussion describes military matters in a manner that is in accord with how Polybius understands them. This is why, for example, when Polybius criticizes the alleged emplacement of the troops in front of the phalanx with the river so close and the troop numbers so high, he adds the following statement: "For to be really useful cavalry should be at the most eight deep, and between each unit there must be a space equal in length to the front of a unit so that there may be no difficulty in wheeling and facing around."<sup>97</sup> Thus, for some Greek historians there are concerns in battle descriptions beyond the narratives themselves.<sup>98</sup>

Despite his censure of Thucydides' work as a whole – which we looked at above – Dionysius of Halicarnassus has very little to say about Thucydides' treatments of battle. In general, he believes that Thucydides' battle narratives share many of the same features of the narrative at large: "His treatment of land-battles is similar, being either unnecessarily extended or excessively condensed."<sup>99</sup> As the arrangement of the events is one of the main problems with Thucydides' text in Dionysius' eyes, it is certain that this sentiment extends to battle narratives.

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<sup>97</sup> Polyb. 12.18.3, trans. Paton (slightly modified). In Polybius' own battle narratives generally he follows the precepts laid out in his critique of Callisthenes. See, for example, his description of the Battle of Cynoscephalae (Polyb. 18.22.1-27.6). Cf. Walbank 1967: 369.

<sup>98</sup> Polybius is not alone in his concern for, or at least emphasis on, formations and battle-orders, topography, and troop numbers. Justin (Justin 11.9.1-10), Quintus Curtius (Curt. 3.7-11), Diodorus (17.32.4-37), Plutarch (Plut. *Alex.* 20.1-5), and Arrian (Arrian 2.6-12) also describe this battle. Of those authors, Arrian's is most in line with Polybius' views. For Arrian, the outcome of the battle hinged on the generalship of Alexander, and his superior tactics. This is encapsulated at 2.10 where Arrian says: "There the action was severe, the Greeks tried to push off the Macedonians into the river and to restore victory to their own side who were already in flight, while the Macedonians sought to rival the success of Alexander, which was already apparent, and to preserve the reputation of the phalanx, whose sheer invincibility had hitherto been on everyone's lips." Trans. Brunt.

<sup>99</sup> Dion. Hal. *Thuc.* 13, trans. Usher.

However, Dionysius is not dissatisfied with all of Thucydides' descriptions of battle for in regard to the sea battle between the Athenians and Syracusans at 7.69.4-72.1 he says: "This and narratives like it seemed to me admirable and worthy of imitation, and I was convinced that in such passages as these we have perfect examples of the historian's sublime eloquence, the beauty of his language, his rhetorical brilliance and his other virtues."<sup>100</sup> Dionysius is not concerned with the military knowledge that some historians felt should underscore any description of warfare, but the narrative alone and more specifically, "the powers of expression" of the historian.<sup>101</sup> For Dionysius, the primary concern is the satisfaction of the reader, for, if he gets lost, then the historian, such as Thucydides, has failed.<sup>102</sup>

Plutarch's objectives are similar to those of Dionysius; his key points of contention with Herodotus are his points of emphasis rather than the vividness of his descriptions.<sup>103</sup> One of the first criticisms that Plutarch lays out comes from the Battle of Marathon. Plutarch feels that he detracts from the Greek, and principally Athenian victory, by including the number of casualties.<sup>104</sup> Not only does the inclusion of this detail play down the victory, it is much worse than that: "...the great edifice of victory collapses and the point of the famous exploit comes to nothing, indeed it seems not to be a battle at all or an action of any great importance, but a brief clash with the barbarians as they landed..."<sup>105</sup> It is not so much Herodotus' narrative that is receiving Plutarch's censure, but rather his failure to "give credit where credit is due": Plutarch seems to be suggesting that following a noteworthy

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<sup>100</sup> Dion. Hal. *Thuc.* 27, trans. Usher.

<sup>101</sup> See Dion. Hal. *Thuc.* 4.

<sup>102</sup> See Dion. Hal. *Pomp.* 3.

<sup>103</sup> Although we, modern readers, may not always agree with the points raised by Plutarch in regard to Herodotus, the Boeotian still gives us important insight into how Herodotus was read in antiquity, even if his reading is not necessarily representative. A similar tract on Procopius would be of considerable value. For Herodotus, see now Baragwanath (2008).

<sup>104</sup> Plut. *On the Malice of Herodotus* 862 B.

<sup>105</sup> Plut. *On the Malice of Herodotus* 862 D, trans. Pearson and Sandbach.



battle, such as the Battle of Marathon, it is the historian's duty to acknowledge, and perhaps even exaggerate, the praise for the victory.<sup>106</sup> Next, Plutarch discusses some of Herodotus' other descriptions of battle. Thermopylae is in the firing line; Plutarch believes that Herodotus has left out some important points and that as a result he ends up slandering Leonidas and the Thebans, the latter of which is not surprising given Plutarch's Boeotian origins.<sup>107</sup> In fact, Plutarch goes so far as to claim that Herodotus is not telling the truth in his narrative, and that he is wilfully misinforming his readers; more often that not this complaint applies to Herodotus' treatment of important characters such as Themistocles.<sup>108</sup> Another criticism hurled at Herodotus is his tendency to assign the motive for actions in a battle to something other than the individual, as is the case with the Spartans.<sup>109</sup> As we have seen, Plutarch's criticisms of Herodotus centre on his omissions and points of emphasis; but these criticisms are often quite petty. Plutarch clearly had a bone to pick with Herodotus, and this is particularly clear in his treatment of "battles with barbarians".<sup>110</sup> In that passage Plutarch's main points of contention are, again, Herodotus' points of emphasis. The right side, in other words the Greek side, is the one that should be emphasized for its success. Herodotus' characterization of the Greeks, and on occasion their foes, is also an issue. By playing up the fighting spirit of the barbarians or downplaying their armament Herodotus is doing the Greeks a horrible disservice; or so Plutarch. Indeed, a little later he says: "...is there anything glorious or great left to the Greeks from these battles, if the Spartans fought with an

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<sup>106</sup> This particular criticism is an important point for Procopius seems to be guilty of the same faults at the end of his narrative of the Battle of Dara; in fact, Plutarch's criticisms as a whole could easily be applied to Procopius and thus his reading of Herodotus could provide some valuable insight into how Procopius might have been read in late antiquity.

<sup>107</sup> Plut. *On the Malice of Herodotus* 865 D ff.

<sup>108</sup> Plut. *On the Malice of Herodotus* 869 D-F. On the truthfulness of Herodotus' account see the comments of Moles (1993). Cf. Wiseman 1993.

<sup>109</sup> Plut. *On the Malice of Herodotus* 871 E ff.

<sup>110</sup> Plut. *On the Malice of Herodotus* 873 E – 874 A.

unarmed enemy, and if the others were unaware that a battle was going on near by..."<sup>111</sup> The only particular 'military' issue with which Plutarch is concerned is the morale and bravery of the soldiers, which even then is in keeping with his concern with characterization.<sup>112</sup> For Plutarch the valour of the soldiery is more important than weaponry and equipment and he is alarmed that Herodotus has given these technological components such prominence.<sup>113</sup> Despite his aim of slandering Herodotus, Plutarch sticks with the narrative features of battle descriptions, leaving aside the technical matters, much like Dionysius. Characterization, and, as with Dionysius, what to emphasize are important issues that any historian must consider when narrating a battle.

Lucian's account is rather general, and it is a fitting closure to this section: he stresses both the points emphasized by Dionysius and Plutarch, who focus on the literary side of a battle, and those emphasized by Polybius, who is concerned with the military theory behind the battle. The context of Lucian's narrative is the Parthian War of AD 162-165; as such, it is not surprising that war has a big role in his discussion.<sup>114</sup> His aims are neatly outlined in the following passage:

So first let us say what the writer of history has to avoid, from what contaminations he must in particular be free; then what means he must use in order not to lose the right road that carries him straight ahead – I mean how to begin, how to arrange his material, the proper proportions for each part, what to leave out, what to develop, what it is better to handle cursorily, and how to put the facts into words and fit them together.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Plut. *On the Malice of Herodotus* 874 A, trans. Pearson and Sandbach.

<sup>112</sup> For an overview of characterization in historiography see Pitcher (2007).

<sup>113</sup> Nearly a millennium later, Zosimus does the same, attributing the outcome of battles to military technology. See, for example, his description of the Battle of the Milvian Bridge (Zos. 2.15-16).

<sup>114</sup> See Lucian *Hist. Conscr.* 2.

<sup>115</sup> Lucian *Hist. Conscr.* 6, trans. Kilburn.

Battle is discussed early on for he comments on an unnamed writer who described “some incredible wounds and monstrous deaths”.<sup>116</sup> He also claims that his casualty figures were quite preposterous, and inconsistent. Lucian notes that experience is important when writing history, particularly as regards war; he discusses another unnamed writer who described a battle yet had no knowledge of weaponry or formations.<sup>117</sup> Indeed, Lucian’s ideal historian should also know about generalship, have experience in a soldier’s camp, and have “the mind of a soldier”.<sup>118</sup> Lucian then notes the importance of truth and clarity of expression before again returning to what is necessary, or at least recommended, for writing a description of battle;<sup>119</sup> it is more than just experience and knowledge of military matters: “Let his mind have a touch and share of poetry, since that too is lofty and sublime, especially when he has to do with battle arrays, with land and sea fights; for then he will have need of a wind of poetry to fill his sails and help carry his ship along, high on the crest of the waves.”<sup>120</sup> Not only must a history be carefully arranged, written by an experienced person, useful, and truthful, the previous line suggests that it must also be entertaining. Lucian is suggesting that the historian should be allowed some artistic licence to

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<sup>116</sup> Lucian *Hist. Conscr.* 20. I discuss this issue in regard to Procopius and the *Gothic Wars* below in chapter five pp 255-260.

<sup>117</sup> Lucian *Hist. Conscr.* 29.

<sup>118</sup> See esp. *Hist. Conscr.* 37: “So give us now a student of this kind – not without ability to understand and express himself, keen-sighted, one who could handle affairs if they were turned over to him, a man with the mind of a soldier combined with that of a good citizen, and a knowledge of generalship; yes, and one who has at some time been in a camp and has seen soldiers exercising or drilling and knows of arms and engines; again, let him know what ‘in column’, what ‘in line’ mean, how the companies of infantry, how the cavalry, are manoeuvred, the origin and meaning of ‘lead out’ and ‘lead around’, in short not a stay-at-home or one who must rely on what people tell him.” Trans. Kilburn.

<sup>119</sup> Lucian *Hist. Conscr.* 39-44. Clarity of expression is one of the most important points for the rhetoricians. See above pp 62-64.

<sup>120</sup> Lucian *Hist. Conscr.* 45, trans. Kilburn.

mould the battle into a pleasing narrative.<sup>121</sup> Lucian provides a model of what he is advocating a bit later in chapter 49:

In brief let him be then like Homer's Zeus, looking now at the land of the horse-rearing Thracians, now at the Mysians' country – in the same way let him look now at the Roman side in his own way and tell us how he saw it from on high, now at the Persian side, then at both sides, if the battle is joined. In the engagement itself let him not look at a single part or a single cavalryman or foot soldier – unless it be a Brasidas leaping forward or a Demosthenes beating off his attempt to land; but first, the generals (and he should have listened to any exhortations of theirs), the plan, method, and purpose of their battle array. When the battle is joined he should look at both sides and weigh the events as it were in a balance, joining in both pursuit and flight. All this should be in moderation, avoiding excess, bad taste, and impetuosity; he should preserve an easy detachment: let him call a halt here and move over there if necessary, then free himself and return if events there summon him; let him hurry everywhere, follow a chronological arrangement as far as he can, and fly from Armenia to Media, from there a single scurry of wings to Iberia, then to Italy, to avoid missing any critical situation.<sup>122</sup>

At the very beginning of this passage we find a reference to Homer and that serves as the anchor for the rest of Lucian's prescription; it is Homer who should serve as a model when describing battle, at least in regard to the narrative's focus. Sticking to a strict chronological framework is not essential: it should be attempted in an historical narrative, but, if there is some contemporaneous action with the events the historian is currently describing elsewhere it is quite permissible to jump to them before returning to the events first narrated. The narrative itself is the main focus of Lucian's comments, but in keeping with his earlier statements about the military experience necessary for the historian he also stresses the role of the general and to a lesser degree the other commanders who participate. At the same time a certain

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<sup>121</sup> Cf. Lucian *Hist. Conscr.* 50-51. Some ancient critics believed that poetry had a more important role than simply entertaining. Aristotle, for example, said the following in regard to the differences between history and poetry: "The difference is that one tells of what has happened, the other of the kinds of things that might happen. For this reason poetry is something more philosophical and more worthy of serious attention than history; for poetry speaks more of universals, history of particulars" (Arist. *Poet.* 1451b, trans. Murray and Dorsch). In the passage of Lucian, then, he could just as easily be subtly advocating not only poetry's pleasing side, but also the universal sort of truth that poetry has.

<sup>122</sup> Lucian *Hist. Conscr.* 49, trans. Kilburn.

amount of explication of the respective formations and their implementation is in order. Thus, for Lucian, describing a battle is more than just plugging contemporary events into a Thucydidean battle-narrative framework.

Among historiographical theorists we see that the majority are more concerned with the dramatic impact of a description of battle rather than its plausibility and accuracy; Polybius, on the other hand is the opposite. Though he recognizes that a vivid account does have its place, this is not to be done at the expense of an account's verisimilitude. Thucydides, whom I have not mentioned, though often concerned with plausibility, is generally interested in the emotional impact of a battle, most evident in his description of the battle in the Great Harbour at Syracuse. Having looked at historiographical theory, it is time to turn to the military thinking which underscored the Greeks' conception of combat.

### **III. Greek Military Theory**<sup>123</sup>

Besides the thinking that lay behind the writing of history, there were a host of views on how the battle which they described worked. The writing down of military theory, as with historiography, has a long tradition, which extends from Homeric Greece to the middle Byzantine period in medieval Constantinople. Though it seems to have lacked the popularity of Greek historiography, at least among the literary

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<sup>123</sup> A full discussion of Greek military theory is beyond the scope of this chapter. As such, I have attempted to present a representative if general discussion at the expense of detail. I have also had to be quite selective and so what follows in no way purports to present all the material to support each claim made. Besides, Greek military theory has been discussed by a number of scholars whose influence should be clear from the following discussion. For its Hellenistic development see Lendon (1999, cf. 2005 *passim*, 2007: 500-508). Wheeler treats many of the issues discussed below in much greater detail (1979, 1982, 1983, 1988a, 1988b, 1991, 2004a, and 2004b). Anderson (1970) provides a useful overview of the Spartan military system, Xenophon, and military theory and practice in the fourth century. Pritchett's far-reaching studies on the Greek state at war are also important, especially for my purposes, volume II (1974). Much of Greek military theory was formulated in the Hellenistic age. Besides the comments of Lendon referred to above, see Chaniotis' (2005) detailed treatment of Hellenistic warfare. Cf. Shipley 2000: 334-341.

elite, it is still an important part of the military thinking of the ancient world, which seems to have had an impact on at least some of the writers of histories, whether they were conscious of this or not.<sup>124</sup> As Lendon notes: “Greek historians, heavily influenced by a tactical conception of combat, usually used that model as the structuring armature of their accounts of battles: the formation, deployment, and movement of forces tend to form the backbone of the narrative, with other material – stratagems, the brave deeds of individuals, remarkable occurrences like panics, paradoxes, and touching stories – included intermittently along the way.”<sup>125</sup> Given that Procopius, as a classicizing historian, was part of the Greek historiographical tradition, we might expect that he would have been influenced by similar thinking. In this section I shall provide a very general, and selective, overview of Greek military theory, focusing on Homer, because many Greeks believed that his works provided the basis for all discussions of military theory, and two representatives of the morale/tactics dichotomy in Greek military theory, Xenophon, being a proponent of the former, and Polybius of the latter.

## Homer

Homer has cast a large shadow over Greek military thinking.<sup>126</sup> Greek military theory can be traced back to Homer; indeed, to many a Greek Homer’s two epic poems, and in particular the *Iliad*, provide the basis for all future discussions of

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<sup>124</sup> Lendon 1999: 276. We saw this above with Polybius, and to a lesser extent, Lucian. Procopius, of course, also saw combat, even though unlike Ammianus, he was a secretary and not an officer. Like Polybius before him, the theory that permeates Procopius’ *Wars* could have come to him not through any particular text, but through the officers he served with – Polybius would have fought, and controlled troops, himself. Yet, we know that historians did consult military treatises, for Agathias refers to one at 2.9.2. Given the lack of disclosure of sources by ancient historians, an overview of theoretical works is therefore not unwarranted. Cf. Whitby (1988: 94-105) on the points of contact between the combat described by Theophylact and the treatise of Maurice.

<sup>125</sup> Lendon 1999: 316.

<sup>126</sup> Lendon 2005: 15-161, esp. 20-38.

the nature of warfare. Early in his treatise on generalship, which dates to the first century (AD), Onasander, while discussing the choice of a general, includes a reference to Homer, which alludes to heroic leadership.<sup>127</sup> This trend is even more pronounced in the Second Sophistic with Polyaeus' *Strategica* and Aelian's *Tactica*. Polyaeus, who published a collection of stratagems, possibly in different stages, opens book one with Homer, and provides several examples of the exploits of Odysseus, especially from the *Odyssey*.<sup>128</sup> The second century theoretician Aelian claims, in his *Tactica*, that Homer was the first to write about tactical theory in war.<sup>129</sup> Maurice, the late sixth century writer of the *Strategikon*, includes a quotation from Homer in his collection of maxims.<sup>130</sup> This should not, however, surprise us. As we saw in the first chapter, Homer's poems, and the *Iliad* in particular, were the core texts for early Byzantine education; so Homer will have been on the mind of any Greek intellectual – whether he had military experience or not – who took it upon himself to discuss the many intricacies of Greek warfare. And why not? Both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* describe select episodes in the lives of some of antiquity's most famous generals, notably Achilles, Hector, and Odysseus. The *Iliad*, of course, is dominated by selective scenes of warfare.<sup>131</sup> What is more, the *Iliad* does not refer to one aspect of warfare, but rather provides examples of all sorts of military matters from single combat,<sup>132</sup> battle between massed formations,<sup>133</sup> and the use of stratagems and ambushes,<sup>134</sup> to the speeches of generals before battle,<sup>135</sup> their

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<sup>127</sup> Onas. 1.7.

<sup>128</sup> Polyaeus *Stratagemas* pref. 4-12.

<sup>129</sup> Ael. *Tac.* 1.1: ὅτι Ὅμηρος πρῶτος περὶ τῆς ἐν τοῖς πολέμοις τακτικῆς θεωρίας ἔγραψεν.

<sup>130</sup> Maurice *Strat.* 8.B.82.

<sup>131</sup> Homer was well aware of which parts of battle to emphasize, and which to pass over.

<sup>132</sup> Hom. *Il.* 22 (the final duel between Achilles and Hector).

<sup>133</sup> Hom. *Il.* 11.407ff (Odysseus standing firm in the battle-line).

<sup>134</sup> Hom. *Il.* 10.247ff (Odysseus leading a night raid; to the Greeks night attacks, particularly at this time, would fall under the category of stratagem).

<sup>135</sup> Hom. *Il.* 4.293ff.

subsequent attempts to array the battle-lines,<sup>136</sup> and the vast array of different weaponry from bows to spears. On the other hand the *Odyssey*, though not specifically concerned with battle, is replete with stratagems, as Polyaeus' references attest, and examples of, from a Greek perspective, effective leadership. Plus, the two works provide us with two distinctive types of general, the Achilles, fight from the front archetype, and the Odysseus, use cleverness and trickery, archetype. Indeed, regardless of whether an historian had a predilection for presenting one kind of general or another, or any type of warfare, with the exception of naval combat, he need only trawl the pages of the *Iliad* or, less likely, the *Odyssey*, to find a Homeric precedent. With the exception of generalship, more often than not, single combat – as we saw above recommended by theoreticians of historiography when describing warfare – and massed 'phalanx-like' combat were what they remembered and chose.

### **Xenophon<sup>137</sup>**

Xenophon's proto-military treatise the *Cyropaedia* deserves some discussion for three reasons: it generally presents one side of the morale/tactics dichotomy; it presents what Xenophon felt were the ideal characteristics of a commander, and Procopius himself seems to have read the text.<sup>138</sup> There are a number of features of this text that merit discussion; however, I shall focus on Cyrus' chat with his father Cambyses about his education in the arts of war. An unnamed man had trained

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<sup>136</sup> Hom. *Il.* 16.169ff.

<sup>137</sup> Xenophon has much to say on warfare and so in the interests of brevity, I have concentrated on one of his texts, the *Cyropaedia*, in the belief that it is representative of the military doctrine that he espouses. It also happens to be alluded to by Procopius (*Build.* 1.1.13). On the *Cyropaedia* in general see Due (1989); on the value of the *Anabasis* for military matter see Whitby (2004b) and J. W. I. Lee (2007 *passim*). Cf. Lendon 1999: 290-295.

<sup>138</sup> Besides, Xenophon seems to have transposed onto his fictional Persians the characteristics and values commonly attached to contemporary (i.e. early fourth century) Sparta. For a more detailed exposition of Xenophon's views on generalship and tactics, see Hutchinson (2000).



Cyrus on how to be a general and he taught him a number of things. After referring to logistics and health Cyrus says the following:

...he professed to have been teaching me generalship. And thereupon I answered, 'tactics.' And you laughed and went through it all, explaining point by point, as you asked of what conceivable use tactics could be to an army, without provisions and health, and of what use it could be without the knowledge of the arts invented for warfare and without obedience.<sup>139</sup>

In this passage Xenophon feels that tactics are only one small part of generalship. Morale and obedience are of considerable importance; this discussion also highlights the role that the general plays in their creation and maintenance.<sup>140</sup> One important distinction drawn here by Xenophon is that between order and obedience: order (τάξις) refers to the formation of the battle-line, and how closely together the men are drawn, while obedience (πειθήσθαι) refers to the behaviour of the soldiers towards their commanding officers, and, here in particular, their general. Cambyses then advocates the use of stratagems; it is not enough to defeat one's foe on the field in pitched battle alone.<sup>141</sup> A little later Cambyses clarifies his views on the matter:

Contrive, then...as far as is in your power, with your own men in good order to catch the enemy in disorder, with your own men armed to come upon them unarmed, and with your own men awake to surprise them sleeping, and then you will catch them in an unfavourable position while you yourself are in a strong position, when they are in sight to you and while you yourself are unseen.<sup>142</sup>

It is when the enemy is most vulnerable that one must attack.<sup>143</sup> Cyrus then asks whether there are other ways to take advantage of one's foe; Cambyses says that

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<sup>139</sup> Xen. Cyr. 1.6.14, trans. Miller.

<sup>140</sup> Xenophon, according to his account, was instrumental in the Greek mercenaries' escape from the Persian empire. We should not be surprised, then, that he pays so much attention to generalship, particularly morale and obedience, since in some ways it was these traits that contributed most to the Greeks' success. Cf. J. W. I. Lee 2007: 43-108.

<sup>141</sup> Xen. Cyr. 1.6.27.

<sup>142</sup> Xen. Cyr. 1.6.35, trans. Miller.

<sup>143</sup> Xen. Cyr. 1.6.36. Cambyses says that there is an abundance of opportunities provided over the course of a day by both the enemy and oneself; one has to eat, sleep, and attend the call of nature.

there are several, and that a general must learn from others and invent his own stratagems.<sup>144</sup>

After some discussion of the value of the hunt, particularly as regards the tricks used to catch small game,<sup>145</sup> Cambyses comes to his concluding remarks, and in which he finally turns to the battle itself:

But if it is ever necessary – as it may well be – to join battle in the open field, in plain sight, with both armies in full array, why, in such a case, my son, the advantages that have been long since secured are of much avail; by that I mean, if your soldiers are physically in good training, if their hearts are well steeled and the arts of war well studied. Besides, you must remember well that all those from whom you expect obedience to you will, on their part, expect you to take thought for them. So never be careless, but think out at night what your men are to do for you when day comes, and in the daytime think about how the arrangements for the night may best be made. But how you ought to draw up an army in battle array, or how you ought to lead it by day or by night, by narrow ways or broad, over mountains or plains, or how you should pitch camp, or how station your sentinels by night or by day, or how you should advance against the enemy or retreat before them, or how you should lead past a hostile city, or how attack a fortification or withdraw from it, or how you should cross ravines or rivers, or how you should protect yourself against cavalry or spearmen or bowmen, and if the enemy should suddenly come in sight while you are leading on in column, how you should form and take your stand against them, and if they should come in sight from any other quarter than in front as you are marching in phalanx, how you should form and face them, or how any one might best find out the enemy's plans or how the enemy might be least likely to learn his [Cambyses does not complete his thought]...I think, then, that you should turn this knowledge to account according to circumstances, as each item of it may appear serviceable to you.<sup>146</sup>

Although this list includes some general comments, it reads like a table of contents for any of the military treatises that appear in the fourth century BC through to the

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<sup>144</sup> Xen. *Cyr.* 1.6.37-38. The use of stratagems was another important strand amongst Greek military theorists which, in some respects, stood beside the tactics/morale dichotomy. Significantly, we can find examples of all three (tactics, morale, stratagems) in the works of Homer.

<sup>145</sup> Xen. *Cyr.* 1.6.39-40. The value that hunting had for instilling military skills was recognized throughout antiquity. In late antiquity Maurice, or at least some external editor of the text, appended a discussion on hunting to his *Strategikon*. For East Rome's great political rival the Sasanid Persian Empire, hunting was highly esteemed by the nobility, as evidenced, for example, by the Legend of Mar Qardagh. Cf. Walker 2006.

<sup>146</sup> Xen. *Cyr.* 1.6.41-43. trans. Miller (with revisions).

high Byzantine period; <sup>147</sup> the *Cyropaedia* comes across as a proto-theoretical treatise. Cambyses' words cover just about any military engagement and contingency that Cyrus' army would likely have faced. Clearly, for Xenophon, a great deal was involved in warfare. <sup>148</sup>

For all of its fictional character, Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* has a lot to say about Greek military theory. <sup>149</sup> Plus, many of the points discussed by Xenophon in the text find their way into the 'proper' treatises which were to follow in the fourth century and later. We also see the beginnings of an important dichotomy that was to arise in Greek military theory, which Lendon has drawn attention to: an emphasis on tactics versus an emphasis on morale. <sup>150</sup> For Xenophon it is on the general's shoulders that the outcome of a battle ultimately rests. Once the battle begins, however, it is the morale of the soldiers that plays the most decisive role; even if a tactical formation fails, a boost in morale can still salvage a victory. Now I turn to an author who fell on the other side of the military theory dichotomy: Polybius.

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<sup>147</sup> The following list is by no means exhaustive: Nicephorus II's *De velitatione bellica* (from the tenth century) includes two sections on watch posts (1 and 2), a section on "the assembling and movement of the army", and a section on "the siege of a fortified town"; Nicephorus II's *Praecepta militaria*, which includes a section entitled "On the Encampment" (4); Syrianus' *Peri Strategias* begins with a section on setting up camp, two consecutive sections (3 and 4) on night and day sentinels, what to do when you are attacked while on the march (section 12), how to cross a river and pass through a narrow place (section 14), marching through mountain passes (19 and 20), and siege warfare (21, cf. 26, 27); and Nicephorus Ouranus' *Tactica* includes among a host of different sections one on passing through a variety of different terrains (64), and another on siege warfare (65).

<sup>148</sup> Perhaps the most interesting discussion of 'how to build morale' comes in the next book when Xenophon describes Cyrus' decision while on campaign to use tents large enough for each company (...μέγεθος δὲ ὥστε ἰκανὰς εἶναι τῇ τάξει ἕκαστη...): "...he thought that if they tented together it would help them to get acquainted with one another. And in getting acquainted with one another...a feeling of considerateness was more likely to be engendered in them all (ἐν δὲ τῷ γινώσκεισθαι καὶ τὸ αἰσχύνεσθαι πᾶσι δοκεῖ μᾶλλον ἐγγίγνεσθαι, οἱ δὲ ἀγνοούμενοι ῥαδιουργεῖν πῶς μᾶλλον δοκοῦσιν)..." Even here, although the morale would be fostered by the close proximity of the soldiers to each other, the morale of the men is dependent on the general. Xen. Cyr. 2.1.25, trans. Miller.

<sup>149</sup> For a battle narrative with these precepts in action see book 7 of the *Cyropaedia*.

<sup>150</sup> Lendon 1999 *passim*.

## Polybius<sup>151</sup>

Besides writing his history of the rise of Rome, Polybius also wrote a tactical treatise, which, regrettably, has not survived. Despite this, it is possible to tease out some of Polybius' views of warfare from the pages of his history.<sup>152</sup> Indeed, Polybius did not hesitate to make his views heard and there are a number of digressions that treat military matters, a few of which we shall discuss here. It is also clear that for Polybius tactics are fundamental to a battle's outcome.

In book five, in the context of the first Macedonian War, Philip makes a lightning attack on the Meliteans who were terrified, we are told, by its "suddenness and unexpectedness".<sup>153</sup> However, the attack is foiled because the Macedonians do not have the necessary equipment. As a result of this blunder Polybius rips into the general: "This is the sort of thing for which commanders deserve the severest censure."<sup>154</sup> The cause of Polybius' diatribe is the apparent failure of Philip to prepare for the siege. Furthermore, such a failure is disastrous for two reasons: firstly, in the attack the "bravest men" are exposed to danger without any negligible benefit; secondly, the ensuing withdrawal exposes the army to danger from the enemy who is emboldened by their failure.<sup>155</sup>

In book six we find Polybius' famous digression on the Roman political and military system; although little of what he says is directly relevant to this discussion, there are a couple of items of interest. At 6.39 Polybius discusses the means by which the Romans encourage their soldiers to face danger. He notes that there are

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<sup>151</sup> A host of works have been written about Polybius. For an overview see Walbank's (1972) brief monograph; for a detailed treatment see his commentary (Walbank 1957-1979). Lendon (1999: 282-285) discusses Polybius' views of tactics. On the intellectual framework that underscores Polybius see Champion (2004). Cf. Sacks 1981: 125-132.

<sup>152</sup> "About this matter I have entered into greater detail in my notes on tactics." Polyb. 9.20.4, trans. Paton.

<sup>153</sup> Polyb. 5.97.6.

<sup>154</sup> Polyb. 5.98.1.

<sup>155</sup> Polyb. 5.98.5.

some rewards given out for merit;<sup>156</sup> however, the first thing that he notes is the role of the general. Thus, the first person responsible for boosting morale and emboldening the troops is the man in charge.<sup>157</sup> The distribution of rewards in fact follows the laudatory words of the general. Of the rewards themselves Polybius notes the following acts which garner prizes: the wounding of an enemy; the slaying and stripping of an enemy – with a distinction between an infantryman and a cavalryman – in situations that do not necessitate combat on the part of the whole army, being the first man to mount the wall in a siege; and, helping save citizens and allies. Polybius then goes on to say that “by such incentives they excite to emulation and rivalry in the field not only the men who are present and listen to their words, but those who remain at home also.”<sup>158</sup> It is not only rewards, however, that are effective means of improving the soldiery. Before Polybius discusses rewards he discusses the punishment of miscreants; moreover, punishment is described in more detail than the dispensation of rewards. Polybius finishes off his discussion of rewards and punishments with the following statement: “Considering all this attention given to the matter of punishments and rewards in the army and the importance attached to both, no wonder that the wars in which the Romans engage end so successfully and brilliantly.”<sup>159</sup> Although he does not say so explicitly, Polybius is here acknowledging the role that morale and bravery can have in warfare whether instilled by positive or negative means. What stands out for Polybius in this regard, however, is the manner by which the Romans endeavour to create soldiers with high morale who are

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<sup>156</sup> On the relationship of this passage to Procopius’ encomium on Belisarius in the *Wars* see below pp 302-307.

<sup>157</sup> Polyb. 6.39.2.

<sup>158</sup> Polyb. 6.39.8., trans. Paton.

<sup>159</sup> Polyb. 6.39.11, trans. Paton. Polybius’ discussion of punishments precedes his discussion of rewards and is incorporated into his section on the posting and duties of the night sentinels.

demonstrably brave: the Romans are tackling a military issue in a manner that he considers novel.<sup>160</sup>

Tactics and battle-order play a big part in Polybius' conception of warfare;<sup>161</sup> and this is brought out clearly in his digression on the differences between the Roman legion and the Macedonian phalanx following his narrative of the Battle of Cynoscephalae.<sup>162</sup> A brief reading of Polybius' narrative of the battle will show how important tactics were to Polybius' analysis; the same is true in Polybius' detailed narrative of the second Battle of Mantinea in 207 BC.<sup>163</sup> Polybius opens his excursus by claiming that he is fulfilling a promise that he made earlier to compare the Roman and Macedonian equipment and formation when the opportunity presented itself.<sup>164</sup> He then makes the following important qualification: "and since now in our own times not once, but frequently, these two formations and the soldiers of both nations have been matched against each other, it will prove useful and

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<sup>160</sup> In the next paragraph I discuss Polybius' avowed emphasis on tactics. With this in mind, what is perhaps novel about the Romans for Polybius is that they have achieved such great success while devoting so much attention to morale. Cf. Lendon 1999: 294.

<sup>161</sup> See 10.22.4-7 where tactics play a much more decisive role in Polybius' discussion of Philopoemen than morale.

<sup>162</sup> As I noted, a major dichotomy in Greek military thinking was between tactics and morale. Among the surviving military treatises, it is the emphasis on tactics which is pronounced. Noteworthy examples include the works of Asclepiodotus, Aelian, Arrian, and later Syrianus. None of these authors devotes much space to morale in their handbooks.

<sup>163</sup> Polybius' description of the Battle of Mantinea is recorded in book 11 from chapters 11 to 18 is very characteristic of his didactic approach. So much of what happens in that battle, and Polybius' analysis of it, depends on tactics. For a comparative example, in book 16 Polybius says: "but calculating everything accurately like the expert general he [Philopoemen] was and foreseeing that if Machanidas, when he came up, led his force forward without reckoning on the ditch, **the phalanx would suffer** what I have just described as actually happening to it, whereas if the tyrant took into consideration the difficulty presented by the ditch, and changing his mind, seemed to shirk an encounter, **breaking up his formation and exposing himself in long marching order**, he would then without a general engagement himself secure victory while Machanidas would suffer defeat. This has already happened to many, **who are drawing up in order of battle**, being under the impression that they were not equal to engaging the enemy, **either owing to their position or owing to their inferiority in numbers or for any other reason**, have exposed themselves **in a long marching column**, hoping as they retired to succeed, by the sole aid of **their rearguard**, either in getting the better of the enemy or in making good their escape. This is a most frequent cause of error on the part of commanders." Polyb. 11.16.5-9, trans. Paton (my bold face).

<sup>164</sup> Polyb. 18.28.1.

beneficial to inquire into the difference, and into the reason why on the battle-field the Romans have always had the upper hand and carried off the palm, so that we may not, like foolish men, talk simply of chance and felicitate the victors without giving any reason for it".<sup>165</sup> Polybius is alluding to the fact, or so he saw it, that the reason for the Romans' string of successes against the Macedonians, who had been very successful in Asia and Greece, was their superior battle-order.<sup>166</sup> In the discussion itself Polybius notes that the phalanx is unstoppable in ideal conditions, that is, for frontal assaults;<sup>167</sup> however, the role of the general is still pervasive, for suitable terrain is needed for the phalanx to be effectively employed.<sup>168</sup> One of the principal conclusions which Polybius draws from his comparison is tied to his belief that it is imperative for a general to be well-prepared: the phalanx is only really useful under certain fixed conditions, and since Polybius knows that anything is possible while on campaign, it is the legion's adaptability that makes it so effective.<sup>169</sup> When Polybius turns to describe the battle itself, it is the tactical advantage, which the Romans enjoy, that turns out to be the decisive factor.<sup>170</sup> While morale is important, and Polybius does refer to its role in combat, it is tactics that rule the field of battle, and it is up to the well-prepared general to determine which ones suit the occasion.

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<sup>165</sup> Polyb. 18.28.5, trans. Paton.

<sup>166</sup> Interestingly, Polybius prefaces his detailed exposition of the differences (and following the introduction just mentioned) with some comments on the importance of generalship. As important as tactics are, generalship trumps all else. Livy, who used Polybius in his description of Cynoscephalae, also alludes to this tactical difference, and the importance of level ground. Cf. Livy 33.4.1-4.

<sup>167</sup> Polyb. 18.29.1-2.

<sup>168</sup> Polyb. 18.29.6. We also find, and as we saw above rather unsurprisingly, a reference to Homer and the tight ranks described in the *Iliad*. Cf. Hom. *Il.* 13.131.

<sup>169</sup> Polyb. 18.32.1ff.

<sup>170</sup> Polyb. 18.21-26. Livy (33.8-9), in his description of the battle, modifies Polybius by stressing for the importance of morale and tactics.

## **PART B: THE PRACTICE OF DESCRIBING BATTLE IN THE SIXTH CENTURY**

We have seen the rhetorical, historiographical, and military theory that underscores descriptions of battle in antiquity. I turn here to the practice of Procopius' contemporaries, and near-contemporaries, to situate his battles in the *Wars* in the historical and military intellectual milieu. I shall highlight a few points about a select group of sixth century authors, including Evagrius, Jordanes, John Malalas, Agathias, Urbicius, Syrianus, and Maurice. As abundant as the evidence is from the reign of Justinian, I have included both earlier and later works to provide a more representative sample of how battle was described, and thought about, in the sixth century. My focus here has been on the Graeco-Roman tradition, and the analyses that I provide are cursory, at best, given the constraints of this discussion and the thesis at large. I have divided the writers by religious and secular history, and I begin with the ecclesiastical history and Evagrius.

### **Part I: Religious History**

#### **Evagrius: Ecclesiastical History**

In this section I focus on ecclesiastical history and the Christian chronicle, beginning with the former. Initially, ecclesiastical historians were not concerned with secular events.<sup>171</sup> Yet, as Blockley, among others, has noted, the boundaries between 'ecclesiastical' and 'secular' historiography blurred from the fifth century,<sup>172</sup> as secular matters played a larger role in the narratives of ecclesiastical historians. The ecclesiastical historians generally refer to warfare at some point in their

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<sup>171</sup> In this discussion I am primarily concerned with battle. I will not be going into detail about the nature of ecclesiastical histories. For more information on the ecclesiastical historians themselves see Chesnut (1977), Liebeschuetz (1993), Leppin (2003), Whitby (2003), Van Nuffelen (2004), , and Treadgold (2007: 121-175). On the development of Christian historical thought, and historiography, see Inglebert (2001: 289-553).

<sup>172</sup> Blockley 1981: 86-94. Cf. Blockley 2003.



respective narratives. Those discussions are often confined to the latter books and chapters of their histories. This is true for those whom I do not discuss, such as Theodoret, Socrates, and Sozomen, as well as Evagrius, whom I do.<sup>173</sup>

Evagrius is interesting for a number of reasons, not the least of which is his use of Procopius for much of book four of his *Ecclesiastical History*.<sup>174</sup> As with his predecessors, the amount of material devoted specifically to military matters is slight in the earlier parts of the history; they tend to be quite vague. Moreover, when Evagrius does use the *Wars*, he often skips over Procopius' descriptions of battle. For example, at 4.12 he says, "he [Procopius] records a first victory for the Romans in the territory of Dara and Nisibis, when Belisarius and Hermogenes as well were disposing the Roman armies."<sup>175</sup> In regard to the Battle of Callinicum he simply notes that, "he [Procopius] gives an emotional description of the invasion of the land of the Romans by Alamundarus...and how...Belisarius engaged them by the banks of the Euphrates on the eve of Easter day, under compulsion from his own army, and how the Roman army was destroyed because it did not accept the advice of Belisarius."<sup>176</sup> This tendency to omit large chunks of Procopius' descriptions of battle is perhaps most clear, however, at 4.15, when Evagrius provides a near verbatim quotation from Procopius' *Wars* 3.8.15-29. There is an interesting omission in Evagrius' quotation; he has omitted Cabaon's battle array described at 3.8.25-28 as well as the fighting itself. Just before the deliberate gap Evagrius says, "And on

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<sup>173</sup> One particular aspect of battle that stands out among the ecclesiastical historians, and one to pay attention to, is the siege. The only notable exception is Evagrius' description (*HE* 5.14) of the open-battle between Justinian (the general) and Khusro in 576. For further discussion see Whitby (1988: 265-266).

<sup>174</sup> For a good introduction to, and discussion of, the problems associated with Evagrius see Whitby's translation (2000e). For Evagrius' use of Procopius see Allen (1981: 171-207). Cf. Whitby (2003: 477-492) and Treadgold (2007: 299-308).

<sup>175</sup> Trans. Whitby.

<sup>176</sup> Evag. 4.13, trans. Whitby. For further discussion of Procopius' narrative of the Battle of Callinicum see below pp 151-156, 347-348.

hearing this, he made ready for the encounter”.<sup>177</sup> That sentence is immediately followed by, “And so most of the Vandals’, as he says, ‘were destroyed...”.<sup>178</sup> The only other bit of the passage which Evagrius quotes directly from Procopius is the last sentence; the rest is essentially Evagrius summarizing and paraphrasing Procopius.<sup>179</sup>

The only open-battle which Evagrius describes is the Battle of Melitene in 576.<sup>180</sup> Sieges aside, this battle narrative is the most detailed description from any of the ecclesiastical historians. Evagrius begins it by noting the preparations made for the war; he also notes that the general Justinian “collected such an army of heroic men”.<sup>181</sup> The comment, “heroic men”, suggests that Evagrius might be falling back on standard rhetorical devices for his description. Indeed, his description of the opening moments of the battle is reminiscent of some of the battle-narratives found in the works of earlier secular Greek historians:

Now when he [Khusro] saw opposite him the Roman army, which was organized by Justinian, the brother of the Justin who had been miserably slain by Justin, meticulously equipped, the trumpets resounding the war cry, the standards raised for battle, the soldiery bent on slaughter and breathing rage though combined with exceptional good order, and cavalry of such numbers and quality as no monarch ever dreamed, with many appeals to the gods he groaned deeply at the unexpected and unforeseen event, and was unwilling to begin battle.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Evag. 4.15, trans. Whitby.

<sup>178</sup> Evag. 4.15, trans. Whitby.

<sup>179</sup> The apparatus to Bidez and Parmentier’s text of Evagrius, and, the apparatus to Haury’s text of Procopius, list the other differences between Evagrius’ quotation and Procopius’ text. Bidez and Parmentier, and Allen, suggest that the omission is due to some sort of scribal error or the like; but, I agree with Whitby that this is unlikely, for Evagrius’s statement, “as he says”, as well as the surrounding words which summarize the outcome of the encounter, suggest that Evagrius deliberately left out the battle. See Allen (1981: 185), and Whitby (2000e: 215, n. 40).

<sup>180</sup> Evag. 5.14. This battle is also described by Theophylact (3.12.12-14.11) and John of Ephesus (*EH* 6.8-9). Cf. Whitby 1988: 264-266; and Syväne 2004: 443-444.

<sup>181</sup> Evag. 5.14, trans. Whitby.

<sup>182</sup> Evag. 5.14, trans. Whitby.

Despite the stylized character of this passage, and the battle, there are some interesting points emphasized by Evagrius.<sup>183</sup> From the opening words Evagrius is keen to highlight the organization of the Roman army; he mentions it twice in the course of this sentence, once at the beginning and once in the middle: "...the Roman army, which was organized by Justinian..."; "...combined with exceptional good order..."<sup>184</sup> As we saw above, organization is considered by many Greek historians to be an essential ingredient in success on the battlefield; Evagrius' emphasis on that point seems to suggest that he too may have recognized its importance. Evagrius also stresses the role of numerical superiority in winning a battle. This is not surprising: the point is stressed over and over by ancient historians.<sup>185</sup> Even though they seem to be little more than rhetorical devices, the notice of the war cries and the raising of the standards are also important. Both of these psychological aspects could be used to intimidate one's opponent.<sup>186</sup> Besides the efficiency of the Roman troops – which was greater than any monarch could have expected – the last point which Evagrius stresses is the "unexpected or unforeseen event".<sup>187</sup> This is a factor emphasized, or at least discussed, over and over in secular historiography and military treatises. Syrianus, for example, says, "a general should never have to say 'I didn't think of that'".<sup>188</sup> The sentence quoted is devoted in its entirety to issues of morale; Khusro's is certainly failing and he seems

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<sup>183</sup> See Whitby 2000e: 275, n. 14.

<sup>184</sup> "τὸ Ῥωμαίων στράτευμα ὑπὸ Ἰουστινιανῶ ταπτόμενον"; "μετὰ τῆς εἰς ἄγαν εὐκοσμίας".

<sup>185</sup> In the second half of book 7 of Maurice's *Strategikon*, which is entitled "Points to be Observed on the Day of Battle", chapters 3, 4, and 7 are all concerned with the strength, or apparent strength of one's own army, and that of the opponent. In chapter 7, for example, Maurice says: "Apprehensive at the sight of such a large force, our men will quickly begin to lose courage" (*Strat.* 7.B.7, trans. Dennis).

<sup>186</sup> Maurice devotes a chapter each to trumpets and war cries (*Strat.* 2.17, "Trumpets"; 2.18, "The Battle Cry Sometimes Used").

<sup>187</sup> Chesnut (1977 passim) briefly discusses the role of the unexpected in earlier Greek historiography, before discussing its role in ecclesiastical historiography, including how this colours Evagrius' narrative. Cf. Whitby 2000e: xlvii ff.

<sup>188</sup> Syrianus Magister *Peri. Strat.* 20.6-7, trans. Dennis. The quotation found in Syrianus' text comes from Polyaeus' *Stratagem*s, 3.9.17. Cf. Maurice. *Strat.* 8.1.26, 8.2.36.

doomed to defeat. Plus, Khusro has not prepared properly for this engagement, a major fault of the Persian commander and shah.<sup>189</sup> Once the action of the battle actually begins – and it is described summarily – it is the bravery, or at least the initiative of a Roman Scythian ally, Curs, that leads to victory.<sup>190</sup> Curs, who commands the Romans' right flank, attacks the Persians and they are unable to bear the charge; as a result, they abandon their formation and are slaughtered. It does not, however, end with this frontal assault; the Scythian wing manages to get behind Khusro's line and attacks from the rear. Once the Scythians defeat the Persians they go straight for the baggage and all the royal treasures to be found amongst it. The battle may be short, but Evagrius does note no less than seven significant points: organization and good order, numerical superiority, psychological tactics (war cries), morale, the importance of careful planning and generalship at large, the ability of a battle line to withstand an assault, and the trouble that ensues when one army encircles another and attacks its rear.<sup>191</sup> Plus, the narrative is devoid of any

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<sup>189</sup> There are several chapters in the last two books of Evagrius' *Ecclesiastical History* that deal with some aspect of generalship, which is not altogether surprising considering Evagrius' interest in personalities (see Whitby 2000e: xlvi ff). In book 6, for example, chapter 3 is entitled, "Concerning the generalship of John and Philippicus and what they accomplished"; chapter 4 is entitled, "Concerning the generalship of Priscus, and what he experienced when his army mutinied against him"; and chapter 15 is entitled "Concerning the generalship of Comentiolus and the capture of Akbas". Chapters 4 and 15 are little than summaries of military operations led by the generals named; chapter 3, however, offers more detail about what Evagrius may have considered important characteristics for a general. Concerning Philippicus he says: "This man, after crossing the frontiers and ravaging everything in his path, became master of great spoils, and captured many people of noble birth...he engaged with the Persians and, after a fierce fight in which many distinguished Persians had fallen, he took many captives...and as a general he accomplished other things, by liberating the army from excesses and matters conducive to luxury, and by reining it in towards good order and obedience" (6.3, trans. Whitby). The last point is a *topos* common in historiography throughout antiquity. See Wheeler (1996) for a good discussion of the issue in relation to the Syrian legions of the early and high Roman Empire. Theophylact too praised Philippicus' military knowledge (Theophyl. Sim. 1.14.2-4; cf. Whitby 1988: 278-279; 279, n. 6, 288-289; and *ibid.* 2000e: 293, n. 13).

<sup>190</sup> The Scythians to which Evagrius refers might have been Huns. They might also have been Bulgars, Sueves, or Gepids. See Whitby 1995: 87-92.

<sup>191</sup> There is at least one other notable passage from this chapter. Evagrius refers to "some skirmishing and a certain number of individual combats between men from the two armies, as normally happens" (Evag. 5.14, trans. Whitby), following the main phase of combat discussed

explicit cases where Divine Providence determines the outcome; instead it is explained in human terms. Though the existence of an historical Battle of Melitene is open to debate, the narrative described by Evagrius provides many of the features that ancient writers felt were important in battle.<sup>192</sup>

Evagrius' account of the Battle of Melitene in 576 is one of the high watermarks of his descriptions of battle.<sup>193</sup> Although he discusses many other military matters, and shows a particular fascination for generals, accounts of warfare are invariably little more than notices. At 6.12 Evagrius constructs a speech for the patriarch Gregory of Antioch which he is alleged to have given to the mutinous troops.<sup>194</sup> There are some interesting points made by Gregory. He refers to Manlius Torquatus, for example, as a symbol of courage.<sup>195</sup> Gregory also says in the speech that careful deliberation among the officers, and obedience among the soldiers, can have good results. Perhaps what is most interesting about this speech, however, is that it is the only oration made to soldiers in the text and it is given not by a general, but a patriarch with whom he was acquainted. Even though Evagrius has shied

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here. The incidental nature of the comment points towards the commonness of single combat in the sixth century. See below pp 261-264.

<sup>192</sup> Whitby (1988: 266), on the one hand, questions the existence of an historical Battle of Melitene; Syväne (2004: 443-444, n. 7), on the other hand, is convinced that such a battle did indeed take place. It could very well be that Evagrius' account (and so too Theophylact's, as well as John of Ephesus') was little more than propaganda. The narrative does, after all, have many of the features mentioned by Greek Classical Historians in their narratives of battles, as well as the two main strands of military thinking, tactics and morale. He is likely to have based his account of the Battle of Melitene on some pre-existing account of a battle, or, if all he knew was the existence of the battle, he may have constructed his narrative based on what he learned from reading the battle narratives of someone like Procopius, for example, who mentions all of those seven features at some point or other. With that said, Evagrius still had to choose what points to include, and stress, in his narrative, and the fact that he included such important points and put them together into a plausible account may also be significant. Unfortunately, without further evidence the point is moot. Cf. Blockley 1985: 278, n. 239; Whitby 1994: 227-228.

<sup>193</sup> The other two are his descriptions of the sieges of Edessa (Evag. 4.27), and Sergiopolis (Evag. 4.28). For the former see Whitby (2000e: 323-326).

<sup>194</sup> See Whitby 2000e: 301-302 with notes.

<sup>195</sup> Manlius Torquatus, who lived in the middle of the fourth century BC, is said to have received his cognomen as a result of a gold torque which he won from fighting with a Gaul in single combat. This consul of 347, 344, and 340, is also said to have executed his son for fighting a duel against orders. See Drummond (1996b), on whom this summary is based.

away from explaining things in terms of God in most other descriptions of military affairs, with the exceptions of Edessa and Sergiopolis, here, in this seemingly dire situation, it is a servant of God who averts disaster. The last significant description of warfare found in Evagrius' text is at 6.14 where he describes the siege of Martyropolis in 589.<sup>196</sup> Evagrius describes the alleged treachery of Sittas and the failed siege of Philippicus which followed. Indeed, this narrative is very much focused on the failed efforts of Philippicus. So, we learn that he pursued the siege even though "he did not possess any of the necessities for a siege".<sup>197</sup> Evagrius describes the construction of tunnels to bring down at least one of the towers. He seems to be aware of the positional advantage which the Persians held; as a result, the missiles launched from the walls were shot with greater accuracy. Philippicus is forced to retreat, but his reputation is restored somewhat when the Romans and Persians meet in battle not far from Martyropolis and one Persian hero falls.<sup>198</sup> With the end of this chapter Evagrius' military narrative effectively ends.

Of the ecclesiastical historians, Evagrius has the most in common with secular historians.<sup>199</sup> For our purposes, what is most striking is the degree to which the military narratives which he does include match – at least in terms of the points he describes – those of Evagrius' secular predecessors and contemporaries. As we have just seen, Evagrius places a premium on the importance of morale in battle, particularly in the Battle of Melitene. Good order and obedience are also paramount. He is the only ecclesiastical historian to describe an open battle at any length. Like his ecclesiastical predecessors, Evagrius is interested in the qualities that made

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<sup>196</sup> Cf. Theophyl. Sim. 3.5.11-14.

<sup>197</sup> Evag. 6.14, trans. Whitby.

<sup>198</sup> In reality, however, the Romans lost. Cf. Theophyl. Sim. 3.6.3.

<sup>199</sup> This point has long been recognized. Treadgold (2007: 299-308) discusses Evagrius in the context of Procopius' successors, a list which includes Agathias and Menander.

generals good, though he seems to be a bit more interested in their secular and strictly military qualities; like them he was interested in sieges.

### **John Malalas:<sup>200</sup> the Christian Chronicle**

I now turn to the Byzantine chronicler John Malalas.<sup>201</sup> Though it might seem that chronicles might not be of much use in this discussion, the one discussed here does describe battle, at times in some detail. Those military engagements that are described are presented in narrative form, even though they may be included in a larger chronicle format. In addition, the audience for chronicles need not have been dissimilar to that of classicizing histories. As such, their treatment of battle merits discussion.<sup>202</sup>

Malalas' chronicle is considerably longer than the earlier Constantinopolitan chronicler Marcellinus'; it is also more detailed.<sup>203</sup> The amount of detail that Malalas devotes to battle varies; most of it is little more than a brief notice as we might expect for a chronicle. Book eight, which is concerned with the Macedonians, devotes but one sentence to the conquests of Alexander: "Alexander immediately set out from there [Troy] like a leopard and captured all lands with his generals."<sup>204</sup> Later in the text Malalas relates the conflict between Antiochus IV Epiphanes and Ptolemy IV and again the detail is sparse. Antiochus actually invaded Egypt twice – 169-168 BC and

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<sup>200</sup> The translations are drawn from the translation of Jeffreys, Jeffreys, Scott, et al. Thus, even though I have on occasion modified the translation given (using Thurn's text), I have used their ordering of the work, which differs from the edition of Dindorf, and in some places from the edition of Thurn.

<sup>201</sup> For an introduction to chronicles see Croke (1990: 27-56), and Croke (2001: 1-13, 145-169, 257-265).

<sup>202</sup> Beck 1965; Scott 1981; Ljubarskij 1998; Holmes 2005: 173ff. Cf. Hunger 1978: I, 257-278.

<sup>203</sup> See Jeffreys (2003) for an introduction to Malalas. For a more thorough study of many features of Malalas' work see Jeffreys, Croke, and Scott (1990), on which my discussion is based. Cf. Inglebert 2001: 528-531; Treadgold 2007: 235-255.

<sup>204</sup> Malalas 8.1, trans. Jeffreys, Jeffreys, Scott et al.

again later in 168 BC – but this is relegated to a brief mention in Malalas.<sup>205</sup> In book eleven Malalas records some of the events of the reign of Trajan including his invasion of the Parthian empire, but even then – and perhaps unsurprisingly – the added detail is for events in Antioch alone.<sup>206</sup> The battles on the eastern frontier are not discussed. There are only two significant exceptions where battle is described at any length; they come in book eighteen which is concerned with the reign of Justinian, and perhaps surprisingly, book five which is concerned with the Trojan War.

If the length of book five is anything to go by, Malalas was very interested in the Trojan War.<sup>207</sup> There are two episodes of interest for us; the first of the two relates a battle involving Penthesileia and the Greeks. Her army, which travelled to the battlefield from the Chersonesos, is composed of Amazons and “valiant men”.<sup>208</sup> After a few days rest, her forces march out onto the plain. Malalas, through the voice of Teucer, then describes the order of battle of her forces, and those of the Greeks lined up opposite hers:

Her army was divided into two divisions with the archers standing on the right and the left flanks, while the hoplite foot soldiers, who were more numerous than the cavalry, held the central position; Penthesileia was in the middle of the cavalry with her standard. Then, after the Danaoi had arranged themselves, they stood opposite them, with Menelaus, Meriones, and Odysseus opposite the archers; Diomedes, Agamemnon, Tleptolemus, Ialmenos, and Askalaphos opposite the hoplites; your dad Achilles, Idomeneus, Philoktetes, and the remaining commanders with their armies opposite the cavalry.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Malalas 8.23. It records a battle in which Antiochus' men were defeated and then the general himself turns tail and flees.

<sup>206</sup> Malalas was a native of Antioch and the empire's second city is the focus of the bulk of the text. See Jeffreys 1990: 55-60.

<sup>207</sup> One of the main sources for the Trojan War narrative in Malalas is probably Dictys of Crete, on whom see Bobrowski (2007). Cf. Malalas 5.41 (5.11, Thurn).

<sup>208</sup> Malalas 5.56 (5.26 Thurn), trans. Jeffreys, Jeffreys, Scott, et al. ἀνδρῶν γενναίων

<sup>209</sup> Malalas 5.56 (5.26 Thurn).



Malalas highlights the Greek fighters by naming their commanders alone when describing their battle order, but omitting the names of those – Penthesileia aside – from the opposing force. Following the description of the respective battle-orders Malalas then summarizes some of the main action. Teucer kills a host of enemy soldiers, and the two Ajaxes destroy the hoplites. Then Malalas focuses on the actions of Achilles – not surprising considering Teucer is speaking to Pyrrhus – and in particular his attempts to take down Penthesileia:

And coming near her horse, he struck her with his spear and knocked her from the horse. And then fallen, yet still alive, he dragged her away by the hair. When the rest of the army saw that she had fallen, they turned in flight.<sup>210</sup>

The dragging of Penthesileia is probably an allusion to Achilles' dragging of the corpse of Hector; by this point in the Trojan war Hector had already perished.<sup>211</sup> As with other historians, the death, or capture, of a leader has a deleterious effect on the army's morale. The fleeing Amazons are pursued and many are killed; those who are not killed are taken prisoner and distributed among the entire army.

In Teucer's speech Malalas tells us that there was another battle a few days later. A certain Tithon arrives having brought some Indian cavalry and infantry, in addition to some "very warlike Phoenicians and their king Polydamas."<sup>212</sup> In fact, many other Indian princes came as well in a fleet, and "the contingent was so massive that neither Ilium nor its plains could receive them."<sup>213</sup> The commander of these allied Trojan forces is Memnon. After some rest the massive Trojan force marches out onto the plains "wielding strange swords and slings and square

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<sup>210</sup> Malalas 5.56 (5.26 Thurn), trans. Jeffreys, Jeffreys, Scott, et al.

<sup>211</sup> This is not the first such reference to Penthesileia and her battle with the Amazons outside of the walls of Troy. Cf. Apollod. *Epit.* 5.1-2; Quint. Smyrn. 1.18ff.

<sup>212</sup> Malalas 5.57 (5.27, Thurn).

<sup>213</sup> Malalas 5.57 (5.27, Thurn).

shields.”<sup>214</sup> Memnon himself went out riding a chariot. The sight of this large army and their strange weapons creates anxiety among the Greeks, as Teucer relates.

While in this state of disbelief:

And with a shout the Trojans, along with Memnon, attacked us; and we received their charge and many were wounded. When a significant number from our army had fallen, we, the Greek commanders, withdrew since we could not withstand their numerically superior army.<sup>215</sup>

Though a brief description it is no less evocative. The attack is not just an attack but an ‘assault’ (ὄρην). And, the success of this shock is grounded in the superior numbers of the Trojan forces, which Malalas has highlighted over and over in the battle narrative to this point. Malalas creates tension here because though Neoptolemus (the listener referred to in the passage), and the chronicle’s readers, would have known that the Greeks were ultimately successful, he has presented them in a perilous situation that challenges their expectations.

When the battle begins anew the same scenario unfolds as many men start to fall. It is at this point that Malalas shifts the focus of the narrative to a few select individuals: “When the battle had begun, and many men had fallen, my brother Ajax ordered the kings of the Greeks to hold off the rest of the Indians and the Trojans.”<sup>216</sup> Ajax is highlighted first, followed by Memnon and Achilles. The two Greek heroes then work in tandem to try and bring down the fearsome Indian king. Malalas describes a fierce hand-to-hand combat between Memnon and Ajax, something we might well expect to find in a battle narrative involving Homeric heroes.<sup>217</sup> In this

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<sup>214</sup> Malalas 5.57 (5.27, Thurn) trans. Jeffreys, Jeffreys, Scott, et al.

<sup>215</sup> Malalas 5.57 (5.27 Thurn), trans. Jeffreys, Jeffreys, Scott, et al.

<sup>216</sup> Malalas 5.57 (5.27 Thurn), trans. Jeffreys, Jeffreys, Scott, et al. (slightly modified).

<sup>217</sup> “When Memnon noticed Ajax attacking him he dismounted from his chariot immediately and came near him; they tested each other with their spears. Ajax was the first to turn aside the other’s shield having turned it with his spear, as he attacked violently. Those who were near the Indian Memnon rushed at Ajax when he had Memnon at a disadvantage, and your father Achilles saw this and, thrusting his spear at Memnon’s neck where the tendon was exposed, killed him unexpectedly. When he fell confusion set in and the barbarians fled”

brief episode we again see the psychological impact the death of a leading commander has on its army: the Trojan allied force is stunned by Memon's death and turns in flight. Perhaps significantly, Malalas calls them barbarians when they flee, rather than Trojans, even though he made it explicit earlier that the Trojan army was heterogeneous. Another interesting feature of this incident is the dismounting of the leader to fight against his attacker. The underlying features, however, are morale and heroism.

I now turn to book eighteen of Malalas' chronicle, which is concerned with the age of Justinian. The amount of military detail varies considerably. The Battle of Dara, for example, is only treated summarily.<sup>218</sup> The Battle of Callinicum, on the other hand, is described in detail.<sup>219</sup> At the beginning there is a reference to a standard; as with the narrative of Dara, it is to the Persian royal standard. Here, however, unlike in his Trojan narrative, Malalas uses the term *bandon* to refer to the standard, a more contemporary term. Malalas is vague about the size of the Persian force.<sup>220</sup> When Malalas turns to the Roman figures, however, he is more specific; he says that Belisarius had a force 8,000 strong, Sunicas 4,000 strong, and Stephanus, Apskal, and Simmas 4,000 strong. This difference could reflect the information to which Malalas had access, though it could just as easily be a point of emphasis. In these early stages of the battle, and the preceding campaign, there are skirmishes, and references to Latin military terminology, as well as to Persian military

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Malalas 5.57 (5.27 Thurn), trans. Jeffreys, Jeffreys, Scott, et al. (slightly modified). Few historians relate death scenes with such anatomical detail. Procopius is one such person and I discuss his descriptions below pp 255-260.

<sup>218</sup> Malalas 18.50.

<sup>219</sup> See Greatrex (1998: 193-212) for the battle and the campaign, and see below (pp. 151-156, 347-348) for some salient features of Procopius' description of the battle and additional bibliography.

<sup>220</sup> Malalas 18.60.

technology.<sup>221</sup> Malalas also hints at the dramatic impact that the mindset of the Roman commanders will have on the Roman army, and its prospects, during the battle: “Belisarius was angry with Sunicas because he had attacked the Persian army on his own initiative.”<sup>222</sup> At this point the Romans are doing little more than reacting to the actions of the Persians; on the other hand the Persians seem to be in complete control: “The Persians turned and stopped and, drawing themselves up, they encamped on the *limes* across the Euphrates and made plans.”<sup>223</sup> By highlighting the discord Malalas alludes to a Roman defeat.

Throughout Malalas identifies some of the commanders involved in the engagement.<sup>224</sup> As we would expect, his preference is to identify Roman commanders over their Persian counterparts. Interestingly, those commanders he does name, whether Roman or Persian, do not necessarily have a role in the battle itself.<sup>225</sup> Malalas now describes the arrangement of the respective forces before giving the date of the encounter, something he did not do for the Battle of Dara.<sup>226</sup> Unsurprisingly, we learn of certain commanders falling and the panic this causes among the troops.<sup>227</sup> A standard is an item of significance again, and he continues to use the term *bandon*. The battle is fierce and Malalas jumps around to describe different parts of the encounter. At one point he describes a stratagem that the

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<sup>221</sup> Malalas 18.60, “the fortress (*castrum*) of Gabboula”; τοῦ κάστρου Γαββουλῶν; “ditch” or “*fossatum*” τοῦ φουσσίου “iron caltrops”, “τριβολος”; “wooden engines”, “ξύλων μηχανήματα”. Cf. “*magister*”, “ὁ μάγιστρος”; “*dux*”, “τοῦ δουκός”; “*limes*”, “τὸ λίμιτον”.

<sup>222</sup> Malalas 18.60, trans. Jeffreys, Jeffreys, Scott, et al.

<sup>223</sup> Malalas 18.60.

<sup>224</sup> Malalas has already identified Hermogenes, Alamundaras, Arethas, Belisarius, Sunicas, Stephanus, Apskal, and Simmas. Now he identifies Dorotheus and Mamantios. Later we are introduced to Andrazes, Namaan, Abros, and Stephanakios.

<sup>225</sup> Dorotheus, Mamantios, and Hermogenes, for example, are not referred to in the description of the fighting itself.

<sup>226</sup> “It was on the 19<sup>th</sup> April, on Holy Saturday, at Easter, that the battle took place.” Malalas 18.60, trans. Jeffreys, Jeffreys, Scott, et al.

<sup>227</sup> “When the Phrygians saw their exarch fall and his standard captured by the Persians, they turned in flight and the Roman Saracens fled with them.” Malalas 18.60, trans. Jeffreys, Jeffreys, Scott, et al.

Persians employed against the Romans; he notes that Apskal charged the centre of the Persian line; he then describes the rash of fleeing Roman contingents that begins with the death of Apskal. After he falls and his men retreat, the Saracens join in the flight from the scene. Malalas then tells us that the Isaurians turn and flee when they see the Saracens running from the battlefield. This in turn is followed by the flight of Belisarius, for Malalas says that when the general sees the Isaurians fleeing, he decides that it is best that he too leaves the scene of the carnage.<sup>228</sup> As with the battle between Memnon and Achilles/Ajax, we find a commander dismounting from his horse to fight on foot. Sunicas and Simmas are singled out for continuing to fight while the rest seem to be retreating.<sup>229</sup> Again, much like the Homeric duel, Malalas uses the fighting of these two commanders to describe in detail the violence of the battle: “They killed two of them [Persians] and captured alive one named Amerdach, a warlike man whose right arm had been cut off at the elbow by Sunicas.”<sup>230</sup> The battle draws to a close as night falls on Callinicum.

There are several similarities between the Homeric era battles and the Battle of Callinicum. Malalas tends to move from general to general, and in this he is following some of the precepts of Lucian.<sup>231</sup> In two of the battles described here, the Memnon-Achilles battle and the Battle of Callinicum, the amount of detail steadily increases over the course of the narrative. At the same time, the narratives begin from a bird’s eye view before eventually building up towards a single combat. The

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<sup>228</sup> This sequence of events is a clear demonstration of causation. In fact, throughout this narrative Malalas seeks to explain what happened, both from the events which preceded the battle, and in the course of the battle itself; he even records the inquiries that followed once the news reached Justinian. Even if a chronicler, such as Malalas, is inconsistent, there is still clearly a lot more going on than mere recording of events.

<sup>229</sup> Malalas 18.60.

<sup>230</sup> Malalas 18.60, trans. Jeffreys, Jeffreys, Scott, et al. “...ἀλλα καὶ μεσολαβήσαντες τρεῖς ἐκ τῶν ἐξάρχων αὐτῶν δύο μὲν ἐφόνευσαν, ἕνα δὲ ζῶντα συνέλαβον τῷ ὀνόματι Ἀμερδάχ, ἄνδρα πολεμικόν, τῆς δεξιᾶς αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀγκῶνος τμηθείσης ὑπὸ Σουνίκα.”

<sup>231</sup> See above pp 79-80.

single combats are significant in that it is in them alone that we find anatomical detail, a feature which will arise in my discussion of Procopius' *Gothic Wars*. What is more, we find further instances of heroism with the doomed commanders dismounting from their horses to fight on foot. Both battle narratives also begin with the ordering of the respective lines, a brief reference to the two sides engaging each other, and then the subsequent withdrawal of part of one side's forces: in the Homeric battle it is the Greeks, who are victorious in the end, and withdraw following the first day of battle; at Callinicum it is the succession of Roman allies who withdraw. There are also differences between the narratives, such as the terminology employed, and the length of the respective battles. In the end, for Malalas the salient features were the ordering of the battle-line, the role of single combat, the bravery of individual combatants, morale, and the capturing of the standard.

## **Part II: Secular History**

### **Agathias: Classicizing History<sup>232</sup>**

In this section I look at works that are ostensibly secular, including classicizing history, and another that seems to stand on his own, Jordanes. There are only a handful of classicizing historians who might be called contemporary to Procopius and so could fit into this category: Malchus, Peter the Patrician, Zosimus, and Agathias. Unfortunately, as regards the first two authors, very little survives, and

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<sup>232</sup> In my survey of the historical works of Procopius' contemporaries I have stuck with the generally accepted categories used by modern historians of late antiquity (ecclesiastical histories, chronicles, secular or classicizing histories). There are good reasons for doing this, as the respective types of history often have different focuses. As I now turn to the classicizing historians, however, it will become clear that, at least as regards the description of battle, they have much in common. As regards the term "classicizing history", see Blockley (1981: 86-94).

what does, adds little to this survey of Procopius' contemporaries.<sup>233</sup> As there is some uncertainty about the date of Zosimus,<sup>234</sup> I have decided to focus on Agathias alone.

Agathias was a well-educated lawyer who seems to have spent most of his days in Constantinople.<sup>235</sup> This self-proclaimed continuator of Procopius – and his preface bears this out well – also happens to have been an accomplished poet.<sup>236</sup>

Agathias' *History*, covering the years 552-559, is quite detailed. He spends a considerable amount of space on military matters.

When we look closer at Agathias' descriptions, it is his effective, and intelligent, use of language that stands out most. For example, early in the description of the siege of Cumae Agathias emphasizes the pace, tension, and chaotic character of the siege, as well as the threat posed by the Gothic commander Aligern, by repeatedly referring to the speed of the arrows shot from Aligern's bow. He does this by opening chapter nine with a sentence that begins with εἰς ἄνω.<sup>237</sup> A few lines later, having reached the top, the soldiers start hurling their spears, and

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<sup>233</sup> The fragments that we have of Malchus' *Byzantine History* are largely concerned with diplomacy: there very well might have been greater discussion of warfare in his work but we just do not know. The bulk of the fragments come from Constantine Porphyrogenitus' *Excerpta de Legationibus*, which was written in the tenth century, and so what we have is determined largely by the interests of the author/compiler of that work. The same is true for Peter the Patrician's work, which was concerned with ancient history rather than contemporary history. However, there are even fewer fragments pertaining to Peter's work: it takes up only thirteen pages in Müller's *FHG* (425-437). There is some discussion of Peter in Cataudella (2003: 431-441). See Blockley's (1981: 71-85) companion volume to his edition of the fragments of Malchus for the background. For a concise overview of fifth century historiography, including some discussion of Priscus and Candidus see Blockley (2003: 289-315). On the work of Menander as a reflection of the military proclivities of the late sixth century see Brodka (2007).

<sup>234</sup> Note the comments of Paschoud (2000: ix-xx), who edited the French edition and translation of Zosimus.

<sup>235</sup> For more on Agathias see Cameron (1970), Kaldellis (1997, 1999a, 2003a), Brodka (2004: 152-192), and Treadgold (2007: 279-290). Cf. Whitby (1992: 31-38).

<sup>236</sup> See Agathias, *pr.* 6-12 for his comments about his poetic past and poetry's worth, and *pr.* 22ff for his role as continuator of Procopius.

<sup>237</sup> Agathias 1.9.1.

again, they do this right away, ἀϋτίκα.<sup>238</sup> Agathias now stresses the quantity of the arrows tossed, before noting that Aligern and his Gothic army were themselves quick in replying, οἱ σχολαίτερον.<sup>239</sup> Then it is back to the arrows of Aligern, and Agathias notes: “for his arrows moved through the air with much whizzing, and, as such, you could not guess their speed”.<sup>240</sup> This poetic repetition is meant to bring the chaotic opening stage of the assault before his reader’s eyes.

Agathias uses intelligent and poetic language in other ways, and they are often couched in allusions to Homer. In chapter ten of book one, during that same siege of Cumae, he describes the tunnel, and the support beams, used to try and undermine Cumae’s walls. Leaves and brushwood are placed under the support beams and set alight.<sup>241</sup> The kindling is soon ablaze, and not long after that, the support beams are turned to ash, and the wall overhead collapses.<sup>242</sup> This tactic enables Narses and his men to storm the city, but they are beaten back by tightly arranged Gothic defenders.<sup>243</sup> Fire is a key characteristic of the *urbs capta*,<sup>244</sup> and, it is closely associated with the burning of Troy.<sup>245</sup> Given that the context here is the siege of a city, this is perhaps no accident; Agathias seems to be alluding to Troy and the *Iliad*.<sup>246</sup> The language certainly suggests as much.<sup>247</sup> On the other hand,

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<sup>238</sup> Agathias 1.9.1.

<sup>239</sup> Agathias 1.9.1-1.9.2.

<sup>240</sup> Agathias 1.9.3.

<sup>241</sup> Agathias 1.10.6.

<sup>242</sup> Agathias 1.10.7.

<sup>243</sup> Agathias 1.10.9.

<sup>244</sup> On the history of the *urbs capta* topos see Paul (1982).

<sup>245</sup> See Rossi (2004: 24-30) for the connection between flames and Troy.

<sup>246</sup> Agathias uses *φλόξ* for flame, a word that Homer frequently employs in the *Iliad*. Homer does not describe the burning of Troy in the *Iliad* of course; the best known description is Virgil’s in book 2 of the *Aeneid*. He does, however, describe the burning of the Greek ships in book 16 (*Il.* 16.150ff.), which, to my mind, looks ahead to the later burning of the city. What is more, I suspect that most, if not all, of Agathias’ readers would have made the connection between Homer, the *Iliad*, and the fall of Troy. Interestingly, Aeneas consults the Sibyl from Cumae in book 6 of the *Aeneid*.



Agathias describes flames towards the end of book four in chapter 19 when he discusses the massacre of the Misimians. In their rage an unnamed Roman sets fire to some of the Misimian huts, which, owing to their inflammable materials, burst into flames.<sup>248</sup> Agathias also tells us that some of the victims were burned alive.<sup>249</sup> In this instance Agathias uses πῦρ rather than φλόξ. Although the main objects of the Roman rage in the massacre are the Misimian men, it is the suffering of the women and children that attract most of Agathias' attention. We find an important woman pierced through the chest with a torch, thus incorporating the images of the flames, and the suffering of women, in one sentence.<sup>250</sup> Agathias does not stop there, and the suffering gets worse. Children are seized from their mothers, some of whom are tossed to their deaths on the rocks, others hurled onto the tips of spears.<sup>251</sup> As we would expect, Agathias criticizes the Romans for these immoral acts.<sup>252</sup> Besides providing Agathias with an opportunity to discuss morality, the suffering of women and children is also a marker for the *urbs capta* as well as the *Iliupersis*, or fall of Troy.<sup>253</sup>

The siege of Onoguris, a descriptive *tour de force*, includes some of the same characteristics that I have just described. What stands out, however, is that Agathias does not simply reproduce them in the manner that he had before. We have just seen how he uses the speed of arrows to heighten the pace and tension in the siege of Cumae. In fact, missiles seem to be a favourite subject of Agathias, and in the

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<sup>247</sup> Agathias 1.10.6-7. Many of the words used are either rare, or have a Homeric pedigree, such as ἔκκρεμές (not Homeric, but rare), ὀρθοστάδην (rare), ταχυδαέξ (rare) ἐρηρησμένα, αὔον, φλογός, and ἀντίθεσιν.

<sup>248</sup> Agathias 4.19.4.

<sup>249</sup> Agathias 4.19.5.

<sup>250</sup> Agathias 4.19.4.

<sup>251</sup> Agathias 4.19.5.

<sup>252</sup> Agathias 4.19.6.

<sup>253</sup> On the connection between the suffering of women and children and the *urbs capta* see Rossi (2004: 40-44).

course of this description he uses them again in a manner beyond mere reportage, likening the barrage of arrows to a blizzard: “accordingly missiles were flying in rapid succession, such that their density shaded the whole sky as if they were naturally bonded to each other. This scene resembled a great blizzard, or, a tremendous explosion of hail accompanied by violent winds”.<sup>254</sup> Not only is Agathias using a similar subject, arrows, to create a tense, chaotic, and fast-moving scene; but, he has done it here in a slightly different, and arguably more interesting, way, through imagery, while making a subtle allusion to Homer.<sup>255</sup> Leo the Deacon also used this image.<sup>256</sup> The imagery in this battle is not all visual, for Agathias appeals to our ears as well, both through the words’ meaning and how they sound when read, to increase, or at least, maintain the heightened tension. After returning to his much loved bows, Agathias describes the sounds of the engagement:

The shouting rose to a great din and the trumpets on both sides sang in accompaniment the songs of a warrior. The Persians were booming with their drums [τοῖς τυμπάνοις ἐβόμβουν] and raising the war-cry for the sake of intimidation, and the neighing of the horses, the clattering of the shields, and the crashing together of the breastplates led to some boisterous and disordered noise.<sup>257</sup>

Agathias also returns to the images of flames following the Roman victory. After the panicked Persian flight, he describes the Romans setting the wicker-roofs on fire, along with their siege equipment.<sup>258</sup> The flames soon soar to the sky leading many of the Persians to suspect, falsely, that their side had been victorious and set the fortress alight.<sup>259</sup> These Persians are cut down by the Romans.<sup>260</sup> In sum, there are

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<sup>254</sup> Agathias 3.25.1.

<sup>255</sup> During the battle of the Greek wall in book 12 the stones, “dropped to the ground like snowflakes which the winds’ blast whirling the shadowing clouds drifts in their abundance along the prospering earth” (Hom. // 12.156-158, trans. Lattimore). The vocabulary might not be the same, but the image certainly is.

<sup>256</sup> Leo diac. 1.8.

<sup>257</sup> Agathias 3.25.7.

<sup>258</sup> Agathias 3.28.1.

<sup>259</sup> Agathias 3.28.1.

a number of ways that this siege description builds on images and themes developed throughout the *History*. The repetition of these Homeric allusions also forces us to confront the Homeric dimension. Agathias follows Lucian's dictum on cinematic coverage; after detailing the sounds of battle, Agathias focuses on the general Justin; he then zooms out to the Persians, flies over to the Dilimnites, before homing in on the commanders Angilas and Theodorus.<sup>261</sup> By and large, there are a number of similarities between the historiographical theory advocated by Lucian, and the historiographical practice adopted by Agathias, at least as regards the description of battle.

The most remarkable episode from the description of Onoguris is found in the latter stages of the siege when Agathias turns to Ognaris and the elephant, in a scene that brings together all of the elements that I have discussed thus far. Agathias is describing the rampaging pachyderms when he shifts his focus to a spear-bearer of Martin, named Ognaris. This man finds himself hemmed in a narrow spot with death seemingly starring him in the face. In a desperate move, he unleashes one last attack:

...he struck the elephant that was bearing down on him ferociously with his spear and drove home the point, so that it was left dangling. The elephant found the blow unbearable and, since it was brandishing the spear before its eye, it was horrified and so leapt backwards, and, whirling round his trunk like an uncoiling spring, struck many of the Persians and sent them headlong, now stretching it out as long as it could go, and emitting a harsh and wild noise. Suddenly he shook off those seated on his back, and having hurled them to the earth, he trampled them to death. Then he struck fear into the whole mob of Persians, startled the horses when he approached them, and cut through and shredded whatever he came across with his tusks. The scene was filled with lamentation and confusion.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Agathias 3.28.3.

<sup>261</sup> Agathias 3.25.8-3.26.3

<sup>262</sup> Agathias 3.27.1-3.

This passage is reminiscent of the *Iliad*. Homeric heroes tend to kill, or at least, maim, their foes, with a single blow.<sup>263</sup> Agathias himself uses it in at least two other scenes.<sup>264</sup> During the siege of Cumae, for example, we read the following: “When Aligern saw Palladius himself (someone who was not reckless in the eyes of Narses, but a leading man in the Roman army who ranked among the greatest commanders), clad with an iron breastplate and attacking the walls with great determination, he let fly an arrow at him from on high, and it pierced right through the man, his breastplate, and his shield”.<sup>265</sup> Unsurprisingly, Agathias tends to reserve ‘single blow’ incidents to descriptions of sieges. This is the case here; however, the difference is that one lone man manages to do the same not to a fellow warrior, as in the incident with Palladius, but even more remarkably, to an elephant. While personifying the poor pachyderm, Agathias likens the action of the trunk to a spring. And, in the last line, which records the lamentation evident at the scene, Agathias again evokes Homer.<sup>266</sup> Indeed, through employing these techniques and allusions Agathias has brought this exciting, if gruesome, episode before the eyes of his reader.

It is unlikely that Agathias spent any time in a camp, at least based on what we know about his life. As such, and like many of the authors discussed here, there are a host of different opinions about Agathias’ credentials for the writing of a military narrative. Cameron and Rance both censure Agathias, largely on the basis of his civilian background.<sup>267</sup> On the other hand, Syvärne is a bit too generous.<sup>268</sup> Yet, in

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<sup>263</sup> For Homeric battle conventions see the summary of Kirk (1962: 372-375), and of Schein (1984: 76-82). Cf. Renehan (1987: 110), and chapter five below where I discuss similar issues in the context of Procopius’ description of the siege of Rome.

<sup>264</sup> Some examples of the ‘single blow’ in Procopius’ *Wars* are found at 5.23.9-12, 6.2.14-18, 6.2.22-24, 6.5.24-26, and 7.4.23-29. For the Agathian examples see 1.9.4, and 4.19.4.

<sup>265</sup> Agathias 1.9.4.

<sup>266</sup> Hom. *Il.* 22.409. Cf. Leo diac. 1.8.

<sup>267</sup> Cameron 1970: 37; Rance 2004a: 283-284.

some of his descriptions he does demonstrate rather impressive technical knowledge. In his description of the battle of Casilinum in 554 he says: “then Narses bent back and extended the wings to form an ἐπικάμπιον ἐμπροσθίαν (as these tactics are called)”.<sup>269</sup> This very manoeuvre, the *epikampion emprosthian*, is described by Asclepiodotus,<sup>270</sup> Aelian,<sup>271</sup> and Agathias’ contemporary, Maurice.<sup>272</sup> During that same description of the Battle of Casilinum Agathias uses the words συνασπισμός,<sup>273</sup> which is the locking of shields together, and ξυλλοχισμός,<sup>274</sup> which refers to a parallel arrangement of units deployed in a row. Both words are rare with a classical pedigree; nevertheless, Agathias has used them correctly. In the early stages of the siege of Onoguris Agathias gives an extended description of the ‘wicker-roofs’ (σπαλίωνας), or sheds, commonly used during sieges to shield soldiers when approaching the walls.<sup>275</sup> Although this is a far from exhaustive list, these examples do suggest that the civilian Agathias had some familiarity with contemporary military thinking, or at least, had enough sense to speak to the people who did.

Overall, there are a number of common elements in Agathias’ descriptions of battle: his tendency to play with the narrative order, for he is often interrupting the narrative to digress on some issue which is often only indirectly related to the events

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<sup>268</sup> Syväne 2004: 25.

<sup>269</sup> Agathias 2.9.2.

<sup>270</sup> Asclep. *Tac.* 11.1.

<sup>271</sup> Ael. *Tac.* 45.3.

<sup>272</sup> Maurice *Strat.* 12.a.7.

<sup>273</sup> Agathias 2.8.4; Asclep. *Tac.* 3.6, 4.3; Ael. *Tac.* 11.2-5; Arr. *Tac.* 11.3-4. Maurice (*Strat.* 12.a.7.52-53) uses the contemporary, if slightly different, term *phoulkon*. Cf. Rance 2004a: 273, n. 19.

<sup>274</sup> Agathias 2.8.4; Asclep. *Tac.* 2.5.

<sup>275</sup> Agathias 3.5.9. Ammianus (19.7.3) too refers to wicker-roofs in his extended description of the siege of Amida in 359. The words he uses are *cratesque vimineas*. Differences aside, the respective authors’ descriptions of battle are fairly similar, at least as regards to their penchant for poetic language, and vivid narrative. On Ammianus’ aesthetic see Sabbah (1978: 541-594); on his battle narrative technique Kagan (2006: 23-95).

being narrated; when the narrative is progressing, the pace is rarely blistering, though he does tend to elide significant chunks of a battle; he tends to interject, particularly at the end, to inform the reader of the moral undertones of the individuals and groups involved in the battle (such as the Franks following the Battle of Casilinum); in keeping with the previous point, Agathias tends to present leading individuals in narratives as either good or bad, again part of the moral purpose underlying his *History*; and he tends to avoid any real discussion of fighting. Thus, by and large, Agathias' battle narratives are unique, are infused with many poetic elements, and in a related manner, have epic character.

### **Jordanes**

Jordanes' work is unusual, and does not neatly fit into any one of the categories I have discussed thus far; it has elements of a chronicle, as well as elements of a classicizing history. As regards the historian himself, Jordanes seems to have led a similar life to Procopius; both men served in an administrative capacity under a high-ranking commander and both were provincials who headed to Constantinople, presumably where they spent the last few years of their lives.<sup>276</sup> Jordanes, an Illyrian, wrote two historical works, the *Romana* and the *Getica*. In many ways the two pieces work together; Amory has gone so far as to postulate that

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<sup>276</sup> There is a wealth of scholarship dealing with Jordanes. See especially O'Donnell (1982: 223-240), Goffart (1988: 20-111), Wolfram (1988: 3-18), Heather (1991: 3-67), Croke (1983), Croke (1987), Amory (1997: 291-307), Croke (2003: 363-375), Merrills (2005: 100-169), Croke (2005a: 473-494), and Goffart (2006: 56-72). Earlier scholarship had not been kind to Jordanes; he was regarded as little more than an epitomizer of Cassiodorus, particularly in his *Getica* (see, for example, Wolfram 1988: 3-18). But, those studies listed above adopt a more positive position towards Jordanes. Of that list, Amory (1997: 291-307) and Croke (2003: 363-375) are perhaps the best introductions to Jordanes. Despite the considerable interest that Jordanes has attracted, scholars have generally been interested in his work only as regards what it has to say about the Goths. To my knowledge, no one has yet to give Jordanes the kind of treatment that I am giving Procopius; I hope to rectify this in the future.

the *Getica* was “an excursus from the *Romana*”.<sup>277</sup> A quick glance at the pages of the *Getica* seems to support such a claim. Jordanes relegates military matters to brief references and tends to record only the final outcome of a battle. So, at 7.50 for example Jordanes says: “After conquering various tribes in war, and to be sure winning over the others through peace”.<sup>278</sup> In some places foreign rulers, such as the classical Persian shah Xerxes, decide against engaging the Goths because of their martial virtues: “He was not bold enough to try them in battle, being overcome by their courage and steadfastness”.<sup>279</sup> According to Jordanes, the Macedonians also trembled in fear at the courage of the Goths: “When the Macedonians saw them coming against them with confidence they were stupefied, and, so to speak, the armed were terrified of the unarmed.”<sup>280</sup> Most references to battle do indeed read like chronicle entries. As regards individuals, Jordanes passes over most emperors, except for those whom he felt were of significance to the Goths, such as Maximinus Thrax.<sup>281</sup> In his description on the origins of this third century emperor Jordanes is keen to emphasize his military virtues.<sup>282</sup> Indeed, Maximinus, who was of equestrian stock, did have a military background and his accession was thanks in no small part to the Danubian troops with whom he was campaigning on the

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<sup>277</sup> Amory 1997: 294.

<sup>278</sup> Jord. *Get.* 7.20.

<sup>279</sup> Jord. *Get.* 10.64.

<sup>280</sup> Jord. *Get.* 10.65.

<sup>281</sup> He is otherwise known as C. Iulius Verus Maximinus. Maximinus reigned from March 235 until spring 238 when his troops mutinied and assassinated him. For two complementary accounts of the reign of Maximinus see Potter (2004: 167-172) and Drinkwater (2005: 28-33). Cf. Campbell 1984: 68-69.

<sup>282</sup> See in particular Jord. *Get.* 15.84-91. Maximinus Thrax is also discussed by Herodian, who was no fan, at 6.8.1-8.6.8, and the writer of the *Historia Augusta* (HA *Max.* 1.1-27.8). The *vita* of the two Maximini in the latter's account draws heavily on Herodian's. Cf. Whittaker (1969: lxxi-lxxxii) for Herodian's characterizations of the emperors whom he discusses.

Rhine.<sup>283</sup> Jordanes, however, tends to exaggerate his military pedigree; he claims, for example, that Maximinus was eight feet tall,<sup>284</sup> that he won many prizes for his feats during the performance of some military games,<sup>285</sup> and that he rose through the ranks with relative ease.<sup>286</sup> When Jordanes discusses the accession of Theodosius I, he resorts to a *topos*, however true it might have been, in describing the actions which he took following the Battle of Adrianople.<sup>287</sup> Moving on, Jordanes creates a Gothic king named Ostrogotha who is said to have fought a battle with his Gothic forces against the Gepids.<sup>288</sup> In regard to the fighting itself, Jordanes says little beyond, “and there [the River Auha] they fought with such great valour, and since they fought with similar weaponry they turned against their own.”<sup>289</sup> This sort of detail is typical of his battle descriptions, with one notable exception: the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains.

Jordanes’ description of the battle between Aetius and Attila is by far the longest and most detailed found in the *Getica*.<sup>290</sup> Plus, the battle narrative itself is by

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<sup>283</sup> Maximinus in fact spent most of his brief reign – though it was longer than many of his mid-third century counterparts – campaigning along the Rhine and Danube. See Drinkwater 2005: 28-33.

<sup>284</sup> Jord. *Get.* 15.85.

<sup>285</sup> Jord. *Get.* 15.86.

<sup>286</sup> Jord. *Get.* 15.87. This is not to deny that Maximinus rose through the ranks for he certainly did; I am only implying that Jordanes’ account is a little misleading, for I do not think that it could not have been as quick as he suggests.

<sup>287</sup> Jord. *Get.* 139. Cf. Wheeler 1996.

<sup>288</sup> Jord. *Get.* 17.99-100. Cf. Wolfram 1988: 29-40, 397-398, n. 61; and Heather 1996: 113-117.

<sup>289</sup> Jord. *Get.* 17.99.

<sup>290</sup> Jord. *Get.* 36.190-42.219. The battle took place in 451 and was fought between Aetius and his allied Roman forces and Attila and his Hunnic alliance. There are a number of modern accounts of the battle, of which the most recent is Richardot’s discussion in the third edition of his *La Fin de L’Armée Romaine* (2005: 351-367). See Thompson (1996: 137-156, esp 148ff), and Stickler (2002: 135-145) for the campaign leading up to the battle. Maenchen-Helfen (1973: 131) is completely unimpressed with the battle: “It [the finding of a fragment of a Hunnic cauldron in northern France] gave new impetus to the search for the battlefield near the *locus Mauriacus*, a favorite hobby of local historians and retired colonels.” The historical significance of this battle is contested. Heather (1995) doubts that it was as significant as Jordanes and Gregory of Tours make it out to be. Croke (2001: 59), rather dismissively, says, “the Huns...were routed in 451 in the overrated battle of the Catalaunian Fields.”



no means straightforward. Jordanes is constantly playing with the order of the narrative and its pace. From the onset we are told by the narrator Jordanes, in Homeric or Virgilian fashion, that the battle itself was of note: “Oh fortunate battlefield, you have the trustworthy succour, the sweet comradeship, and the comfort of those who themselves delight in enduring danger at the same time.”<sup>291</sup> Jordanes frequently plays with the narrative order, and he often intrudes into the narrative itself.<sup>292</sup> In the midst of another pause in the action, Jordanes explicitly highlights the battle’s complexity: “since it was certainly a famous battle, just as it certainly was complicated and perplexing.”<sup>293</sup> A prophecy concerning the death of a chief commander is related in the battle narrative, as is the topography of the battle site.<sup>294</sup> He also describes the order of battle and the positioning of the troops in the battle line; while describing the battle order he includes some comments about Roman and Hunnic tactics:

They [the Romans and their allies] placed in the centre Sangiban...thus preparing with military caution to enclose with a faithful throng the man in whose disposition they were less than confident: for it is easy to embolden one who has obstacles placed before their flight to fight of necessity...the Hunnic battle-line was arranged so that Attila was placed in the centre with his bravest men.<sup>295</sup>

Jordanes’ characterization of Attila is ambiguous: though many of the references suggest that Attila was a coward, there are some passages that leave the question

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<sup>291</sup> Jord. *Get.* 36.190.

<sup>292</sup> “That portion of the earth accordingly became the threshing-floor of countless races. Both battle-arrays bravely joined battle. Nothing was done under cover, but they contended in open fight.” Jord. *Get.* 36.192. There are two interesting points about these comments of Jordanes: first, he puts a lot of emphasis on morale; second, he expresses a clear aversion for stratagems and trickery, which is something his contemporary Procopius does not, as we shall see below (pp. 168-169).

<sup>293</sup> Jord. *Get.* 37.194.

<sup>294</sup> Jord. *Get.* 38.197.

<sup>295</sup> Jord. *Get.* 38.198.

open.<sup>296</sup> In good classicizing fashion Jordanes gives us a catalogue of the nations participating in the battle on the side of the Huns.<sup>297</sup> He also identifies some of the men, though, unsurprisingly, only the prominent individuals. There is then a struggle for the summit of the hill, but it is brief; although this may very well have been the first phase of the battle, it also serves to provide suspense by delaying the central part of the fighting.<sup>298</sup> During this phase Attila notices that his men have been thrown into confusion and he quickly decides to encourage them through a speech.<sup>299</sup> The speech is quite long,<sup>300</sup> and, immediately following it, the Huns rush into battle. The narrative itself is detailed and graphic, if somewhat sparse on breadth of description. Again we find Jordanes stressing confusion and the magnitude of the battle; in fact chapters 207 and 208 are short on combat itself, and heavy on the gore that resulted from it.<sup>301</sup> The scene then shifts, and, Jordanes roves around the battlefield singling out particularly noteworthy deeds. He describes the death of Theodoric, which was foreshadowed by Attila's soothsayers. We also discover that both Attila and Thorismund nearly die in the course of the battle; the difference is that Attila ends up fleeing – the battle had essentially been decided – and Thorismund stays and fights

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<sup>296</sup> See *Jord. Get.* 40.207. We see here a point emphasized repeatedly by Procopius: it is the duty of the commander to encourage the troops and discipline in battle is his responsibility. See Whately 2008, and below pp 159-163.

<sup>297</sup> *Jord. Get.* 38.200.

<sup>298</sup> Jordanes was certainly not averse to omitting details about battles and there seems to be little other reason to do so here. Jordanes has delayed the commencement of the action twice; his intention is certainly to amplify the excitement felt by the reader and so justify his claims that this battle is one to remember.

<sup>299</sup> *Jord. Get.* 39.202. "Then Attila, when he saw that his army was thrown into confusion by what had just happened, thought that it would be best to bolster their spirits through extemporaneous address".

<sup>300</sup> *Jord. Get.* 39.202-206. In it Attila emphasizes five points: first, that his men do not need to be encouraged for their previous actions have proved their worth; second, that war is part of their very being; third, whoever attacks first is bolder and so the Huns should attack; fourth, the evidence suggests that the Romans are cowards and are in fact already afraid; fifth, and finally, Fortune has been preparing the Huns for victory in this battle, or in other words, the Huns have some divine powers on their side.

<sup>301</sup> *Jord. Get.* 40.207. "They fought hand-to-hand; the battle was fierce, unwieldy, frightfully unrelenting, and it was like nothing anyone in the past had ever recorded".

bravely though he is almost killed.<sup>302</sup> The close calls do not stop there however; Aetius also nearly reaches his end in the midst of the confusion.<sup>303</sup> When the battle ends we are told that the body count is immense and that still Attila is not afraid; in fact, Jordanes likens him to a lion pierced by hunting spears that paces back and forth around the entrance to his den.<sup>304</sup> Several lines later we learn that 165,000 men died in the engagement and the ensuing siege of Attila's encampment; 15,000 Gepids and Franks are also said to have perished in some fighting that took place before battle began.<sup>305</sup>

Although Jordanes usually omits detailed discussions of battle, there are several points that we can take away from his description of the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains. He doggedly reminds us that it was a confusing event, and perhaps his inclusion of several different episodes intermixed seemingly at random was deliberate; it would be hard to read his description without getting that sort of impression.<sup>306</sup> Jordanes manipulates the arrangement of events quite frequently; for him the drama and excitement of battle are important. In good historiographical

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<sup>302</sup> Jord. *Get.* 40.210.

<sup>303</sup> Jord. *Get.* 40.211. "Indeed Aetius too was separated by the confusion of night, when he wandered in the midst of the enemy..."

<sup>304</sup> Jord. *Get.* 40.212.

<sup>305</sup> Jord. *Get.* 40.217.

<sup>306</sup> The intermingling of different episodes that perhaps do not belong in the order in which they are presented, or, better, are narrated, while other important episodes omitted, is clear when we look at the events in the order in which they are presented in the narrative: the battle is great; he tells us where the battle took place; the catalogue of Roman allies; the battle begins and it is great; he summarizes the preceding campaign; he notes the prophesy that one commander would die; he again tells us where the battle took place; he again describes the Roman battle line; he describes the Hunnic battle line and their tactics; catalogue of nations participating on the Hunnic side; struggle for the summit; Attila's speech to his troops; the battle begins (again) and it is great; he highlights the gore of the battle including how red the water of the nearby stream was following the battle; he describes the death of Theodoric; he describes the near death of Attila; he describes the near death of Thorismund; he describes the near death of Attila; the scene shifts back to Attila and his determination not to give up despite the number of dead bodies; the ensuing siege of the encampment; the Goths are upset at the death of their king; Thorismund now eager to avenge his father's death; in this greatest of battles with such great nations participating Jordanes now gives us the number of dead. Jordanes is clearly jumping around, but it is not because he himself is confused.

fashion Jordanes puts a lot of stress on individuals, in this description the four brave heroes who determined the course of battle; Attila, Aetius, Theodoric, and Thorismund. The psychological preparedness – the mindset – of the participants was a crucial factor in the Romans' success. As regards the cause/s of a battle's outcome, it is morale and heroism which are the key factors, not the respective armies' tactical arrangements. In this regard his description is very Roman.<sup>307</sup> Though Jordanes may not have known much about the battle itself, he may have drawn upon his own experiences to reconstruct this description of battle.<sup>308</sup> This particular battle has a distinctively literary character and is full of classical allusions, much like Procopius' book 8 as we will eventually see. Although this may cast doubt on the battle's ultimate importance, Jordanes has still relayed the confusion of a battle by mixing in many of the features outlined in part A above; he also preferred a psychological explanation and discussion of a battle rather than a tactical one.

### **Part III: Sixth Century Military Theory**<sup>309</sup>

After Aelian's and Arrian's respective works no specific military treatises were written in Greek prior to the sixth century.<sup>310</sup> A handful of works were produced in

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<sup>307</sup> Lendon 1999. cf. Harris 2006.

<sup>308</sup> I think that Richardot's (2005: 352) statement is a little unfair: "Il n'a pas le goût du détail militaire d'un Ammien Marcellin." The fact is, Jordanes had different objectives from Ammianus (and a different educational background); besides, Ammianus is not as straightforward as Richardot suggests. If Richardot had been referring to the text at large, then I would agree, but not on the basis of this battle narrative alone. On Ammianus see Sabbah (1978), Matthews (1989), Barnes (1998), Drijvers and Hunt (1999), and Kelly (2008).

<sup>309</sup> For an excellent overview of late Roman military manuals see Rance (2007a: 343-348). I omit Julius Africanus, on which see Dain (1967: 335-336), and the comments pertaining to military matters in the anonymous *On Political Science*.

<sup>310</sup> Two notable Latin handbooks were written: the anonymous *De rebus bellicis*, a short treatise, which dates to the fourth century that is concerned with issues such as equipment and defence; and the *Epitoma rei militaris* of Vegetius, an important work, with some antiquarian characteristics, that may date to the fourth century, though more likely the fifth. On the former see the papers in Hassall and Ireland (1979), and Liebeschuetz (1994); on the latter see Goffart (1977), Barnes (1979), Zuckerman (1994), and now Charles (2007).

the century, including the *Epitedeuma*, and the *Tacticon* of Urbicius;<sup>311</sup> the *Peri Strategias*, the *Rhetorica Militaris*, and the *Naumachia* of Syrianus;<sup>312</sup> and the *Strategikon* of Maurice.<sup>313</sup> The *Tacticon* of Urbicius is little more than a summary of Arrian's *Tactica*.<sup>314</sup> The *Rhetorica Militaris* is somewhat unique, being a compendium of military speeches; Rance, following Zuckerman, says that it probably drew upon earlier rhetorical handbooks.<sup>315</sup> Urbicius' *Epitedeuma*, much like the earlier *De rebus bellicis*, offers an invention to help the reigning emperor in battle, in this case, Anastasius. The *Epitedeuma* stresses both tactics and morale, for the author claims that it would be especially useful for infantry when up against cavalry,<sup>316</sup> while also noting the defences of an encampment would help morale.<sup>317</sup> Yet, his invention has more to do with technology, or better, equipment, than tactics, with some sort of fencing and mounted ballistae defence-system described.<sup>318</sup> Syrianus' *Peri Strategias*, or what we have of it, discusses a host of issues, ranging from strategy (στρατηγικῆς), forts (φρουφίων), and how one must prepare

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<sup>311</sup> The works of Urbicius date to the reign of Anastasius, while the *Strategikon* dates to the 590s. The dates of the works of Syrianus, however, are more problematic, with dates between the sixth century and the late tenth century offered. An edition, translation, and commentary of Urbicius' brief *Epitedeuma* is provided by Greatrex, Elton, and Burgess (2005). For the *Tacticon* see Förster (1877).

<sup>312</sup> The works attributed to Syrianus have attracted some attention. The unity of the texts, and their attribution to the single author Syrianus seems assured, though earlier Dain (1967: 343-344), for example, had treated the *Rhetorica Militaris* as the work of some other author. Some of the more recent works include Baldwin (1988), Zuckerman (1990), Lee and Shepard (1991), Cosentino (2000), and Rance (2007b). The comments of Dennis (1984: 1-7) in his edition, and translation, of the *Peri Strategias*, are also of value.

<sup>313</sup> As regards Maurice, see Dennis (1984: vii-xxiii) in his translation of the treatise, Whitby (1988: 130-132), as well as the comments of Rance in handful of articles (2000: 230-236; 2004a: 266-269; 2004b: 105-106; 2005: 429-431; 2007a: 347-348), all of which build upon his work in his dissertation (1993). Whately (2008: 251-254) discusses the relationship between generalship and discipline the *Peri Strategias* and the *Strategikon*. For the impact of earlier Greek military manuals, whether ancient or late antique, on medieval Byzantine treatises, see Sullivan (1997: 181-195). Overviews of Byzantine tactical manuals are provided by Dain (1967), and Hunger (1978: II, 323-340).

<sup>314</sup> Greatrex, Elton, and Burgess 2005: 42-43.

<sup>315</sup> Zuckerman 1990: 219-223; Rance 2007a: 346.

<sup>316</sup> Urbicius 2.19-20.

<sup>317</sup> Urbicius 12.67-70.

<sup>318</sup> Greatrex, Elton, and Burgess 2005: 50-52.

themselves against siege machines (πῶς δεῖ παρασκευάζεσθαι πρὸς τὰς μηχανὰς τῶν πολιορκούντων), to armament (ὀπλίσειως), how one must guard against sudden attacks from the enemy (πῶς δεῖ φυλάττεσθαι τὰς αἰφνιδίους τῶν ἐχθρῶν ἐπιθέσεις), and the phalanx (φάλαγγος).<sup>319</sup> Syrianus, like his predecessors in the genre, reworks some earlier material, a tendency particularly evident in his discussion of the phalanx.<sup>320</sup> On the other hand, he devotes considerable attention to the defensive works of camps, cities, and fortifications, to surprise attacks, as well as when, or even whether, to make battle.<sup>321</sup> Also of note is the role of the general, which is stressed as soon as Syrianus turned to military matters. The only aspect missing is morale, which is not explicitly discussed in the text. Nevertheless, late Roman warfare – and Byzantine for that matter – was very much about taking advantage of whatever opportunities were presented, rather than the earlier imperial practice of taking battle to the enemy at all costs. This is reflected in the works of Urbicius and Syrianus; significantly, the charge of this task is very much assigned by these writers to the general, which takes us to the last text to discuss.

Maurice's *Strategikon*, a practical work, which manages to describe late Roman warfare while still adhering to many of the practices of the genre, is a text of considerable importance with an obvious slant towards tactics. Its focus is didactic, and it is aimed at the would-be general, though it is meant to supplement training in

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<sup>319</sup> Strategy: Syrianus Magister, *Peri strat.* 4-5; forts: *ibid.* 9; siege machines: *ibid.* 13; armament: *ibid.* 16; surprise attacks: *ibid.* 20; and the phalanx: *ibid.* 15, 17-18, 21-23, 34, 36. One of the most contentious issues surrounding the works of Syrianus are their date of composition; although many date them to the sixth century, significant challenges have been raised, notably by Baldwin (1988), Lee and Sheppard (1991), Cosentino (2000), and Rance (2007b). This bears on my usage of the text in this thesis. As it stands, I find the arguments of Baldwin, Lee and Sheppard, and Cosentino unpersuasive, though the points raised by Rance bear some consideration. Thus, though there are grounds for excluding the works of Syrianus from discussions of sixth century warfare, the absence of conclusive evidence precludes this.

<sup>320</sup> Rance 2007a: 346.

<sup>321</sup> The stratagem is another major concern of Syrianus. Cf. Rance 1993: 180ff.

the field rather than to replace it.<sup>322</sup> Onasander's treatise was certainly a major influence, though it is more likely to have provided the impetus for Maurice, rather than the explicit framework and material for the work.<sup>323</sup> Cavalry manoeuvres make up a considerable portion of the work, in part a reflection of the sort of warfare that the army was engaged in, in part because the section on infantry seems to have been added later as a supplement.<sup>324</sup> Like its sixth century predecessors, the *Strategikon* betrays a real interest in stratagems, and opportunism on the field of battle; besides the sections scattered throughout devoted to ambushes, the subject warrants an entire chapter.<sup>325</sup> There is also a chapter devoted to surprise attacks.<sup>326</sup> One of the most innovative features of the *Strategikon* is the inclusion of a chapter devoted to the types of enemy that the army is likely to face, something which has no literary precedent in the genre of Greek military writing.<sup>327</sup> As noted, there is considerable emphasis on tactics and formation. Significantly, however, Maurice is concerned not only with the formations themselves, but with how they are created, how they operate, and the human efforts behind their employment. Communication, discipline, morale, and training are all rightly regarded as essential to a unit's ability to carry out any of the tactical manoeuvres described, or any of the other actions for that matter. This conflation of the two strands of tactics and morale marks out the *Strategikon* as unusual among military manuals, though not histories. Indeed, as Rance notes, "It also reveals an acute understanding of the realities of combat and

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<sup>322</sup> See Maurice *Strat.* pr. 21-27.

<sup>323</sup> Cf. Rance 1993: 99ff.

<sup>324</sup> In other words, this work was first conceived of as a treatise on cavalry warfare, and only later was the infantry component added. Chapter 12, the later addition, is something of a mixed bag lacking the unity of chapters 1 through 11, including, as it does, points which, in the earlier parts of the work, had been covered under separate chapters, such as the types of formation (12.A.1-7), armament (12.B.4-5), and the crossing of various types of terrain (12.B.18-21). Thus, it does not provide evidence for the inferiority of late sixth century infantry, on which see Rance (2004a, 2005: 427-443, 2007a: 348-359).

<sup>325</sup> Maurice *Strat.* 2.5, 3.16, 4.1-5 (the chapter devoted to ambushes - Περὶ Ἐνέδρας).

<sup>326</sup> Maurice *Strat.* 9.1-5. cf. Maurice *Strat.* 7.A.12.

<sup>327</sup> On these 'ethnika' see Wiita (1977).

an insight into the psychological preoccupation of both generals and troops.”<sup>328</sup> In many ways, and as we might expect given the text’s practical purpose, as evidenced, in part, by its deliberately simple language, it marks a fitting final text since it incorporates the two strands of military thought referred to in this survey of Greek military theory, order and morale, as well as the equally important issues of generalship and the use of stratagems.

### **Chapter Overview**

I opened this chapter by looking at three different, though often complementary, approaches to battle in antiquity. The rhetoricians and historians put great stock on the arrangement of the narrative itself, its truthfulness, its clarity, and its vividness. All three devoted some attention to battle deployment, tactics, and the importance of formation in battle. Morale, however, was also sometimes attributed an important place in battle. Homer, unsurprisingly, cast a large shadow over the three groups, though they often took quite different things from his texts, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Procopius’ contemporary historians tended to include a hodge-podge of features from the three theoretical strands as regards what traits to include, how to arrange the text, and which conception of combat (tactics/morale) to focus on. In regard to the latter, both Malalas and Maurice stress tactics and morale. Jordanes, on the other hand, plays with the arrangement of his material a great deal, while Evagrius includes a reasonable number of rhetorical elements in his *Battle of Melitene*. It is now time to turn to the *Wars* to uncover Procopius’ grammar of battle.

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<sup>328</sup> Rance 2007a: 347.



### Chapter 3: The *Persian Wars*

Now that I have looked at Procopius' personal and cultural background, it is time to turn to the *Wars* itself, beginning with the *Persian Wars*. Of the four sections of the text, it is the first two books, which make up the *Persian Wars*, which have attracted the most attention. Significant work has been done on the wars themselves, Romano-Persian relations, and Procopius' depiction of Sasanid Persia.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, an historiographical analysis of his descriptions of battle has not yet been undertaken. In the previous chapter we saw that there were a number of features that Greek writers felt were important for writing a description of battle; moreover, an historian had to be selective, and careful, when arranging his material. There are six factors that I want to examine in this chapter on the *Persian Wars*: the programmatic battle and siege, which have a bearing on not only Procopius' discussion of the *Persian Wars*, but also the *Wars* as a whole; how Procopius arranges his descriptions of the many varied pitched battles, skirmishes and sieges in the *Persian Wars*; the excitement of battle, or how Procopius makes his descriptions more engaging to his audience; Greek military theory and Procopius with regard to tactics and morale; Procopius' characterization of Belisarius and Khusro, which is tied to the prominent role that generalship plays in Greek battle descriptions; and finally a summary look at the importance of context in understanding Procopius' narratives of battle in the *Persian Wars*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Whitby 1986a, 1988, 1994; Blockley 1992; Howard-Johnston 1995; Shahîd 1995, 2002; Greatrex 1998; Greatrex and Lieu 2002; Haarer 2006; Börm 2007; Dignas and Winter 2007; Lewin and Pellegrini 2007.

<sup>2</sup> In my discussion of these issues I will not be going over every battle and siege in detail; space precludes such an approach and many of the issues raised about some battles and sieges are relevant to others. Historical treatments of individual battles can be found in the works of Rubin (1957), Greatrex (1998), Haldon (2001), Syv anne (2004), Lenski (2007), and Lillington-Martin (2007), among others.

## **Part I: The Programmatic Battle and Siege**

As some scholars have noted, the first battle in Procopius' narrative of the *Persian Wars*, which features the Ephthalites against the Persians, serves as a programmatic battle.<sup>3</sup> Some of the issues that surface in this description recur in the battle descriptions in the *Persian Wars* which follow. Discipline is a problem in this battle, and the Hunnic king's handling of it is exemplary. Although his men are overly zealous to fight the Persians the Hunnic king manages to temper and then channel their zeal to the Huns' advantage. That advantage is the use of trickery – the employment of a trench which is carefully concealed – to lead the Persians to their doom.<sup>4</sup> Besides leading the Huns to victory, the Hunnic king's commendable actions also bring the issue of generalship into focus for the reader. So much of what happens in this battle hinges on the performance of the two commanders. On the one hand, the Persian king is impetuous and foolhardy, marching off to battle at the first opportunity, while paying little regard to the exigencies of the occasion.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, the Hunnic king is calm cool and collected, and as we have just seen, his management of his troops leads to their success. Their king and commander is careful to take full advantage of the information at his disposal,<sup>6</sup> including the qualities of his men, and the topography of the terrain.<sup>7</sup> Conversely, the Persians and their king race with fury against the Huns and, as a result, fail to comprehend the danger approaching (i.e., the trench), so plunging to their deaths. At the same time, his failure to control his troops also alludes to the problems that this will cause later generals. The focalization of the battle primarily through the persons of the respective commanders points towards the important function that generalship will have in the narrative to follow. Morale also plays a role in this battle, for the

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<sup>3</sup> Lillington-Martin (2007), Whitby (pers. comm.).

<sup>4</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.4.7-8. cf. Maurice *Strat.* 4.3.

<sup>5</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.4.2.

<sup>6</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.4.6.

<sup>7</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.4.7.

raising of the Hunnic banner, though in part to signal the breaking of the treaty, serves as a point around which the troops will rally. Indeed, royal banners and unit standards surface again and again in the battle narratives found in the *Persian Wars*. The trench itself is significant for it not only alludes to the aforementioned Herodotean battles, thereby providing an intertextual dimension, but it also plays an important role in future battles, such as Dara, for there too the Persians are worsted by an army utilizing a trench.

Bearing this in mind, not only is the description of the fighting in the battle itself important, so are the comments of our narrator Procopius before the battle begins. At the start of chapter 4 Procopius says, “not much later, taking no notice of the oath, he wanted to take vengeance on the Huns for their outrage”.<sup>8</sup> Although it seems to be relatively insignificant at this point, the problem of breaking an oath reappears on a number of occasions in the speeches found before and during Procopian battles. By highlighting the problem at the beginning of this battle, Procopius signals its future importance.<sup>9</sup> In this battle we also find a sudden reversal, or *peripeteia*, that comes as the Persians charge across the plain. The Persians are in pursuit of the advance party of Huns sent to ensnare their attackers and, while the pursuers continue their headlong charge, they unknowingly plunge into the trench. Here the reverse is quick, and complete: their disorderliness contributes. Good order plays an important role in the subsequent battles, and a commander who fails to arrange his troops appropriately does so at his own risk. Thus, through this historical battle, Procopius has alerted us to some of the features of a battle that he feels we should watch out for.

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<sup>8</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.4.1. Procopius actually notes a little earlier that (1.3.17-22) that Peroz also made a rather devious attempt to evade the disgrace of subjection to the Ephthalites by prostrating himself to the sun when ostensibly he was prostrating himself to the Ephthalite king.

<sup>9</sup> Khusro's actions in 540 provide a Persian example of this.

The first siege related is the siege of Amida and, much like the Ephthalite/Persian battle, we can read it as a sort of programmatic siege.<sup>10</sup> Most of the attention is focused squarely on Kavād; the Persian emperor is the driving force of the siege. On occasion Procopius goes so far as to describe the action as if it is Kavād himself who is carrying out the siege while his men watch idly by.<sup>11</sup> There are a number of elements mentioned here that crop up in future sieges including the repeated attempts by the attackers to breach the walls (at Amida this fails), the little attention that is given to the time scale of the siege itself, the advancing of the narrative in relative chronological order with a number *analepses* and *prolepses* (as with the pitched battles), the moving to the wall of siege works and ladders which inevitably fail in the first attempt,<sup>12</sup> the use of an artificial hill by the attackers to remove the height advantage of the defenders,<sup>13</sup> and the use of mines to undermine the defences of a city or, conversely, by the

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<sup>10</sup> There are two other detailed accounts of this siege which were written much closer in time to the events than Procopius: the *Chronicle* of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite (50-54) and the *Ecclesiastical History* of Pseudo-Zachariah (*HE* 7.3-5.). Pseudo-Joshua's account is probably the best account and so the one to be consulted first regarding the events. For the Anastasian war see Rubin (1957: 363-366), Greatrex (1998: 73-119) and Haarer (2006: 47-65). Blockley discusses Anastasian foreign policy (1992: 86-96). For the siege itself see Greatrex (1998: 83-94), Trombley and Watt (2000: 53-63), Greatrex and Lieu (2002: 62-67), Syv anne (2004: 502), and Lenski (2007). The older narratives of Bury (1923: 10-15) and Stein (1949: 77-106) are still useful. Debi  (2004) discusses the variant Greek and Syriac traditions of the battle.

<sup>11</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.7.12. Pseudo-Zachariah (*HE* 7.3, 7.4) and Pseudo-Joshua (276-281) also refer to Kavād's energy in undertaking the siege. Thus, it is also possible that this is a more general characteristic of sieges, rather than a Procopian characteristic (Whitby, pers. comm.). With that said, both Pseudo-Zachariah and Pseudo-Joshua are more likely to say Kavād and his army rather than Kavād on his own. Kavād is very much the focus, but his faceless army still carries on much of the fighting at his behest. So, at the start of 7.4 for example, Pseudo-Zachariah says: "When Kawad and his army had been defeated in the various assaults which they made upon the city" (trans. Hamilton and Brooks). At 276 Pseudo-Joshua says: "On the fifth of October, a Saturday, Kawad, king of the Persians, came from the north, and he and his whole army laid siege to the city of Amid, which is with us in Mesopotamia" (trans. Trombley and Watt). Procopius, conversely, says: "Kavād while besieging Amida attacked the walls on all sides with a mechanical ram" (1.7.12). Thus, although it is subtle, the difference remains. There are places where Procopius mentions Khusro with his whole army, but it is these instances where a shah himself fights that are unique.

<sup>12</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.7.12.

<sup>13</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.7.14.

defenders to undermine and counterattack the siege works of the attackers.<sup>14</sup> Women, who play such a conspicuous role in the siege narratives found in historiography, poetry, and tragedy, also play a role.<sup>15</sup> In this particular instance, however, the women are not valiantly fighting against the attackers, and in the process playing a role reserved for the most desperate of situations, or wailing and crying in the ensuing sack, but instead are acting in a way most unbecoming to women, even prostitutes, or so Procopius.<sup>16</sup> Their immoral behaviour – the lifting of their clothing to the Persian attackers – has three functions in this siege narrative: it foreshadows the eventual sack of the city which Procopius relates through the Magi;<sup>17</sup> it highlights the role of morality and the divine in a city's or fortress' sack or salvation;<sup>18</sup> and it marks a turning point in the war itself, for the Persians had planned on departing prior to this and instead decide to stay and press on.<sup>19</sup> Procopius then describes the Persian discovery of an undefended underground passage.

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<sup>14</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.7.14. Whereas, on the one hand, the Persian actions are focalized through Kavad, the Romans, on the other hand, are characterized as essentially leaderless, their actions focalized collectively. In this light, Procopius does not mention the death of the bishop. The death of an important leader is often a key moment, and it does show up in other sieges that Procopius describes. Pseudo-Zachariah (*HE* 7.3) mentions the death of the bishop and for him it is a turning point in the siege. In Pseudo-Joshua's account he says that after the attackers were demoralized for failing in their attempt to breach the walls with the mound the citizens behaved somewhat inappropriately by mocking the Persian shah. He notes that this is because the righteous bishop had passed away. After discussing his life briefly and then returning to the siege Pseudo-Zachariah says that Jesus appeared to the dispirited Kavad and that things soon turned in his favour. Pseudo-Joshua's account refers to the negligence of the defenders (in Procopius' case the monks) though he too alludes to the possibility of divine punishment (280). Regardless, all three writers are drawn to the moral reasons for the city's fall. In Procopius' case, by omitting the bishop's death he draws attention to a slightly different moral reason, the lifting of the prostitutes' clothing, for the sack of the city, as well as to the advantages that able leadership in war can provide. On monks and sieges see Greatrex (2007). Cf. Debié (2004) on the role of courtesans and the image of Jesus in the various accounts of the siege.

<sup>15</sup> Paul 1982; Rossi 2004: 40-44, 115-124.

<sup>16</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.7.18.

<sup>17</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.7.19.

<sup>18</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.7.31.

<sup>19</sup> Their behaviour in fact seems to spark Kavad's renewed efforts.

As with the traditional story of Troy, it is often when the attackers or defenders let up that trouble arises and the turning point in the siege arrives.<sup>20</sup> This often comes as a result of poor intelligence or a poor grasp of the situation. The defenders, for example, may not suspect an attack at a particular part of the fortifications and so, if such an assault occurs, as it does so here in the siege of Amida, they are caught unawares. It is this unexpected event, which is also a feature of many of Procopius' descriptions of battle, that is so crucial to the outcome. After discovering a comparatively weak point in the walls of Amida, Kavad gathers a few men to try and breach them at night. The Persians, as with their Greek counterparts at Troy, find their enemies inebriated and asleep after celebrating a festival.<sup>21</sup> The attack that comes catches them completely off guard both literally and figuratively. There is one final point about Procopian sieges in the *Persian Wars* that we can glean from this description: here it is the Persians who are carrying out the siege and, by and large, most of the sieges described in the text are conducted by them. What is more, they are more often than not successful in those sieges.

There can be little doubt that these first descriptions of battle serve as introductions and guides for the engagements to follow. Through them we, the readers, are introduced to those matters which Procopius feels are important for understanding battle in the manner that he does.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, the question as to whether this first battle as well as the first siege are really meant to be signposts for the readers is addressed by Procopius himself. It is significant that in the programmatic battle we find the Persians marching to defeat in pitched battle, and in the programmatic siege we find the Romans succumbing to the Persians.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.7.15-19.

<sup>21</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.7.23. Their attempts to defend the city are desperate, but ineffectual.

<sup>22</sup> Procopius tends to act as a guide leading his readers down a particular path with a distinct interpretation like Thucydides, rather than presenting, perhaps, one path and a couple of possible interpretations like Herodotus.

<sup>23</sup> On Sasanid poliorcetics see Börm (2007: 169-171).

Midway through the description at 1.4.13 Procopius says: “just as I have said”. This very phrase, or some derivation thereof, is found throughout the text,<sup>24</sup> although it might seem to be little more than an historiographical *topos*, it is in fact more significant. By leaving these little reminders throughout his narrative Procopius is indicating to his readers that he wants them to bear in mind what he has already said.<sup>25</sup> Each component of the text, such as the respective battles and sieges, is part of a larger whole, and though the practice of reading in antiquity was certainly a laborious task, the readers were meant to remember significant chunks as they went along, with earlier events, such as the two encounters discussed here, providing the interpretative keys for subsequent episodes.<sup>26</sup>

## **Part II: Narrative and Explanation in Procopius’ Descriptions of Battle**<sup>27</sup>

### **Narrative Order**

Procopius’ descriptions of battle are not all set out in strict chronological order and there is considerable manipulation of the details of the battles.<sup>28</sup> The Battle of Oinochalakon opens with Procopius telling us that the emperor had sent Sittas from Byzantium against the Armenians.<sup>29</sup> In the next sentence Procopius says: “For Sittas had tarried there [Constantinople], since the Romans made the treaty with the Persians.”<sup>30</sup> In the next line we first learn that Sittas arrived in Armenia, but Procopius includes an *analepsis* and says that Sittas delayed still further after receiving his orders from the emperor.<sup>31</sup> From 2.3.9 to 2.3.15 Procopius describes the events that took place prior to Sittas’ arrival at

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<sup>24</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.7.1; cf. Procop. *SH* 1.11.

<sup>25</sup> The significance and location of the various referents in the *Persian Wars* differ.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Champion 2004: 1.

<sup>27</sup> My title for this section is borrowed from the subtitle of Rood’s (1998) monograph on Thucydides, which is largely focused on how Thucydides arranges the *Histories*.

<sup>28</sup> Though the focus here is on one pitched battle, what is said holds true for sieges too.

<sup>29</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.3.8.

<sup>30</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.3.9.

<sup>31</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.3.9.

Oinochalakon in Armenia, albeit here in chronological order. Then, Procopius quickly shifts to the men carrying the tablets, whom we now learn had taken another route and did not meet with the Aspetiani.<sup>32</sup> These messengers had presumably left earlier and got lost over the course of both their, and the main force's, journeys, though Procopius only mentions it now. Next there is another *analepsis* for we learn that part of the Roman army had undertaken the march by a different route and along the way had attacked some of those very people with whom they were trying to forge an alliance.<sup>33</sup> They too had presumably left at the same time as the rest of the army – though admittedly we cannot say for certain – and this would have happened, or rather could have happened, before the attempts had been made to make a treaty.<sup>34</sup> From 2.3.19 to 2.3.21 events proceed in chronological order, but there is yet another *analepsis* at 2.3.21 when Procopius says, “but as it happens Sittas had thrust his spear in the ground”; we are not told when this happened though the language suggests that it happened a little earlier. The rest of the narrative proceeds in chronological order.<sup>35</sup>

These uses of *analepsis* in this battle, and in the other battles of the *Persian Wars*, are significant. Throughout the descriptions Procopius makes references to the past, or at least puts current events in relation to the Roman past. So, we learn that the Battle of Dara was the greatest defeat of the Persians for some time, that the route of the invasion that led to the Battle of Callinicum had never been used before, and that the Battle of Anglon was the worst loss that the Romans had ever suffered. In this case, the Battle of Oinochalakon, we learn before the narrative even gets underway that it was the rebellion of the

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<sup>32</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.3.16.

<sup>33</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.3.17.

<sup>34</sup> Procopius' language does suggest that they may have left and encountered the Armenians before they knew of Sittas' efforts to appease much of the Armenian populace: “not knowing about the agreement”.

<sup>35</sup> I have not found any prolepses in the battle found in the *Persian Wars*, though that it is not to say that there are not any prolepses in the battles from the rest of the *Wars*.



Armenians that led to Justinian's decision to launch a counter-strike,<sup>36</sup> but, there were other events that occurred before the Romans reached Armenia – the first event noted – that made this battle even more tragic than it might otherwise have been. Much of the narrative of the *Persian Wars* looks to the past, and Procopius is mindful that we, the readers, are conscious of this relationship between past and present; the contrast of which is presented in such a way that amplifies the magnitude of the events of this first section of the *Wars*.

### **Rhetorical Emphasis: Procopius' Use of Numbers**

In Procopius' descriptions of battle we get a selective presentation of events. The complexity of battles necessitates this. In order to get some idea of how Procopius chooses and emphasizes certain elements of a battle I shall focus here on one particular phenomenon: his use of numbers in his descriptions. Procopius can be quite vague and inconsistent with his use of numbers, whether distances, troop sizes, hostages taken, or casualty figures.<sup>37</sup> There are places where Procopius only provides an adjective like "many" or "few". The numbers used also tend to be round figures, like 2,000 for example, or approximations, like "around 2,000". Procopius is quite selective regarding the numbers he does report, and when he does report them he is selective in regard to when he reports them. A look at the Battle of Dara will bear this out.

In the Battle of Dara Procopius gives us a description with varying details: in this single battle his narrative is precise, vague, and incomplete.<sup>38</sup> Procopius tells us that Belisarius, having been appointed General of the East by Justinian,

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<sup>36</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.3.1-7.

<sup>37</sup> For modern bibliography on related issues (numbers in historiography) see chapter 5 below pp 268-281.

<sup>38</sup> For a reconstruction of the Battle of Dara using battlefield archaeology see Lillington-Martin (2007). Cf. Bury 1923: 82-85; Rubin 1957: 367-369; Greatrex 1998: 169-185; Haldon 2001: 28-35; Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 88-91; and Syv anne 2004: 461-462.

assembled “an army of much repute”.<sup>39</sup> A few lines later Procopius describes the disposition of the respective armies and, beginning with the Roman army, says that Buzes was placed on the far left with many horsemen, as was Pharas the Herul with 300 fellow countrymen;<sup>40</sup> on the right of those men were Sunicas and Aigan with 600 horsemen;<sup>41</sup> on the far side he says that there were many horsemen under John, Cyril, Marcellus, and Dorotheus;<sup>42</sup> at an angle to those men were 600 horsemen under Simmas and Ascan.<sup>43</sup> Next, Procopius tells us that “the men with Belisarius and Hermogenes” stood at the back in the centre, with no hint of the number of troops arrayed at that position, let alone the types of troops they were.<sup>44</sup> Having described the deployment of Roman forces, Procopius now tells us the totals for the two respective armies: 25,000 troops in the Roman army; 40,000 troops in the Persian army.<sup>45</sup> A skirmish opens the battle and in the melee 7 Persians fall.<sup>46</sup> We are not told the number of troops involved, and so there is no way of knowing how significant that loss was. All we learn is that “a certain detachment of horsemen who held the right wing” left the collected Persian forces and attacked “the men under Buzes and Pharas”.<sup>47</sup> The next part of the battle is the two single combats of Andreas, which brings the first half of the narrative to a close.

Procopius tells us that on the following day the Persians were bolstered by an additional 10,000 troops,<sup>48</sup> but once the main phase of the fighting on the second day begins we learn that Mihran only arrayed half of the Persian forces

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<sup>39</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.13.9.

<sup>40</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.13.19.

<sup>41</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.13.20.

<sup>42</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.13.21.

<sup>43</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.13.21.

<sup>44</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.13.22.

<sup>45</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.13.23.

<sup>46</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.13.28.

<sup>47</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.13.25. Of course, Procopius quite probably expects that we remember the figures that he has just reported; however, this cannot be the case in those battle narratives in which specific figures are absent.

<sup>48</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.1.

against the Romans.<sup>49</sup> Our next indication of the numbers involved comes when “many Kadiseni” attack the Roman line opposite them, and kill quite a few men, συχνοῦς.<sup>50</sup> In response, the “men with Sunicas and Aigan charge against them at top speed”.<sup>51</sup> In the next line Procopius tells us that the 300 Heruls with Pharas got behind the enemy.<sup>52</sup> In this part of the fighting we learn that “no less than 3,000 died in this struggle”.<sup>53</sup> The Mihran now sends in the Immortals, in addition to “many others”.<sup>54</sup> Belisarius and Hermogenes catch sight of this charge and order “the 600 men under Sunicas and Aigan” to go against them on the right.<sup>55</sup> In addition, “they positioned at the back many of Belisarius’ men”.<sup>56</sup> This attack ends up dividing the Persian force in two so that most were on the right, while some were on the left.<sup>57</sup> By the end of this second phase of the battle, after Mihran has sent in the Immortals, we get our last figure; we learn that the Romans killed “around 5,000”.<sup>58</sup>

Procopius is selective in his use of numbers, not only within specific battles such as Dara, but also throughout the *Persian Wars*. Let us now turn to casualties. As we just saw in the Battle of Dara, Procopius said that seven men died in the opening phase of the battle, two single combatants died at the hands of Andreas, no less than 3,000 Persians died in the first of the two main phases of the fighting, and by the end of the fighting involving the Immortals, we learned

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<sup>49</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.29. Admittedly, from the numbers given thus far, we might reckon that the total Romans arrayed would be 24,995 or 24,996, and as regards the Persians 40,000 plus the 10,000 reserves sent minus the 2 single combatants killed by Andreas and the 7 who fell in the skirmish). But, as we do not know what part of the Persian army the 9 casualties were from, it is difficult to reach a definite total; so, the best course of action would be to fall back on Procopius’ own methods and say that “perhaps as many as 25,000 troops were arrayed against the Roman line”. This is only to give some indication of the problems with Procopius’ figures, as reliable as they may in fact be.

<sup>50</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.38.

<sup>51</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.39.

<sup>52</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.39.

<sup>53</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.42.

<sup>54</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.44.

<sup>55</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.44.

<sup>56</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.44.

<sup>57</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.47.

<sup>58</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.51.

that the Romans killed “around 5,000”.<sup>59</sup> No Roman figures, however, were given. By contrast, in the Battle of Callinicum Procopius said that “they found that the number of their own dead bodies was no less than that of the enemy’s”,<sup>60</sup> which only tells us the comparative magnitude of the casualties, and not the number.<sup>61</sup> The same is true for the Battle of Anglon in which he tells us that the Persians killed a large number of Romans with ease.<sup>62</sup> In the Battle of Nisibis Procopius does give us the number of some Roman casualties, for we learn that the Persians killed 50 men and took the standard of Peter.<sup>63</sup> The Romans, however, win the battle and in the counterattack 150 Persians are killed by a combined force of Romans and Goths.<sup>64</sup> In the Battle of the Phasis River we learn that most of the Persians’ advance force of 1,000 men were killed, while some were taken captive.<sup>65</sup> This left 4,000 Persian men in camp of the initial 5,000-strong expeditionary force and by the end we learn that a significant number of Persians were killed in the dawn raid.<sup>66</sup> What can we take away from all this data? Well, Procopius tells us at the end of the Battle of Dara that the Roman victory was something which had not happened for a long time. Conversely, in the Battles of Callinicum and Anglon, the Romans were defeated. Although Procopius has not misled us in the two defeats, he also does not tell us how many Romans were killed – although there were heavy losses on both sides in these Persian Pyrrhic victories. In the Battle of Nisibis the Romans were

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<sup>59</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.51.

<sup>60</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.50.

<sup>61</sup> Despite the defeat, however, it turned out to be a Pyrrhic victory for the Persians. In fact, the difference in the relative importance of the two major battles of the *Persian Wars*, the Battle of Dara, a Roman victory, and the Battle of Callinicum, a Roman defeat, is probably exaggerated; although the Romans won the former battle, the Persians immediately followed it up with yet another invasion, while in the latter battle, even though the Romans were defeated, the Persians suffered heavy losses, which had a major impact on their ability to continue the war.

<sup>62</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.25.26. Again, the information only gives us a sense of the magnitude of the Roman losses.

<sup>63</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.18.22.

<sup>64</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.18.25.

<sup>65</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.30.39.

<sup>66</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.30.45.

victorious and, as the battle was not described in as much detail as the Battle of Dara, there was no harm in giving the number of Romans killed. Besides playing up the battles themselves, Procopius is trying to emphasize the heroics of Belisarius, for it was his actions that rescued the Romans from certain defeat. Had Belisarius not stepped in and snatched victory from defeat, that total of 50 killed would have been significantly higher. Besides, this figure is substantially lower than the number of Persian casualties reported only a few lines later. Going back to the Battle of Dara, we should bear in mind that Procopius is trying to emphasize this victory, a crucial moment in the narrative and something unique in his eyes in contemporary Roman history. Undoubtedly there were losses on the Roman side, but the Romans had followed Belisarius' instructions and as a result, against incredible odds, had defeated the Persians. By contrast, the recently successful Belisarius had lost the Battle of Callinicum, and the best way to minimize its impact was to play up the magnitude of the casualties suffered by the victorious Persians and disguise Roman losses. In general, Procopius' numbers seem to be quite reliable, although we have seen that he is very selective with the numbers that he does use, and not unintentionally so.

### **The Exhortation**

In this section I will look at the exhortation, and the letter too. Exhortations play a huge role in many of Procopius' descriptions of pitched battle; they serve as important narrative markers; they provide a means of understanding the place of the battle in the narrative at large. They highlight what is significant in the battle to follow, and they give the audience the criteria with which to evaluate the respective generals' performances.

In Procopius' description of the Battle of Dara we find our first set of battle exhortations in addition to two sets of letters which have the same features as exhortations. These letters and exhortations are presented one after another, as

per the historiographic convention, such that the effect is of an open dialogue between the Roman and Persian commanders. They are more than mere historical flourishes on the part of Procopius. They help us, the readers, to interpret the key events which have transpired thus far in the text, and to understand what will follow in the events to come. Besides their textual function they also suggest the dominant position of the two speakers, at least in those cases where we have more than one speaker or letter writer.<sup>67</sup> The fact that Belisarius and Hermogenes send a letter first suggests their dominance over Peroz. Equally, Belisarius and Hermogenes speak last in the two sets of exhortations which follow the exchange of letters: the Roman commanders have the first word and the last with the Persian commander “surrounded”.<sup>68</sup>

When we take a closer look at the two sets of exchanges we can see more clearly how the exhortations and letters fit into, and provide a sort of interpretative key for, the rest of the narrative. At the beginning of the first letter Belisarius and Hermogenes refer to justice and the causes of war implying thereby, that the Persians had been the cause of the current conflict.<sup>69</sup> Despite the fact that the Romans were at least partly responsible for renewing hostilities by breaking a former agreement,<sup>70</sup> Belisarius and Hermogenes ostensibly couch their letter with appeals to justice.<sup>71</sup> Besides being a subtle critique of Roman

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<sup>67</sup> For a sensible study of the role of speech presentation in literature and historiography see Laird (1999). Laird’s book is ostensibly concerned with Latin literature and historiography though he does discuss their Greek equivalents and his conclusions are applicable.

<sup>68</sup> The importance of exhortations in Procopius’ battle descriptions was highlighted by Kaldellis (2004: 29-34) and the following discussion is heavily influenced by his analysis. For the role of speeches in Thucydides’ combat descriptions see de Romilly (1956: 138-150).

<sup>69</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.1-2.

<sup>70</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.9.24.

<sup>71</sup> The building of the fortress of Dara had led Kavād to declare war against Anastasius because of their previous agreement (1.2.15, 1.10.13). Justinian, in a quiet moment in the long war (if we are to follow Greatrex’s (1998) pronouncements), decides to build yet another fortress which again contravenes the original treaty (1.13.2-4). According to Procopius, Kavād used this as a pretext for renewed hostilities. When Belisarius and Hermogenes reply to Peroz’s letter they do not answer his claim that the Romans broke the oath even though in both the exchange of letters and exhortations they address most

foreign policy this letter is also largely concerned with generalship, and to some degree the means by which a general can achieve significant recognition, rather appropriate for Belisarius' first, and one of his most spectacular, victories. In his reply Peroz responds to the charges levelled against the Persians; it is also somewhat curt, and perhaps 'justifiably' so.<sup>72</sup> He corrects the Roman commanders by pointing out that it was their (the Romans') actions that led to the current state of affairs. There follows another exchange of letters which are much shorter. In the response of Belisarius and Hermogenes they claim that Peroz's counter-charges are unjustified.<sup>73</sup> The two suggest further – and there is likely a lot of truth in this – that the crux of the matter is the Persian eagerness for war. Not to worry however, or so Belisarius and Hermogenes, for they claim to have God on their side.<sup>74</sup> When Peroz replies he refers to his own gods and according to him his gods are on his side. As we later see, however, this was not the case.

When the rapid exchange of letters concludes Peroz immediately launches into his pre-battle exhortation. Conversely, as soon as Belisarius and Hermogenes are finished with the letters they array themselves for battle. When compared to Belisarius' actions, Peroz's near immediate exhortation highlights a

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of the other charges levelled against them by Peroz. In reality there were probably a number of reasons for the war, and despite the ambiguity of Procopius' account he does seem to suggest that there was more than one cause. Cf. Procop. *Wars* 1.11-12.

<sup>72</sup> It is much more believable for the second of a pair of letters to refer to issues raised in the first; this is less true for a pair of exhortations. See Pazdernik (1997) for a detailed study of Procopius' analysis of contemporary Roman politics.

<sup>73</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.7.

<sup>74</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.9. Procopius' religious views aside, he puts great stock in the role of God in determining the outcome of a battle or siege in the *Persian Wars*. What is more, in his description (and analysis) of Roman success on the field of battle, and Persian success over the course of a siege, he suggests that the Roman defenders can only really succeed against the formidable challenge of a Persian siege through the assistance of God (more on this below on pp. 144-150).

One of the problems with this passage is that if the Romans had been acting unjustifiably by breaking their oaths, would not an appeal to God be somewhat disingenuous? What this probably suggests is that while the Romans may very well have broken the oath, it is still the Persians who must bear the brunt of the guilt for the war. For Procopius God only acts against sinners, and since the Romans do win this, and ergo God must have been on their side, their, that is the Roman, fault for the conflict must be minimal to the Persians'.

key mistake that he has made in this battle. His letter had ended with an overly boastful claim that he would soon be bathing in Dara, and without any consideration for the necessities of war, he gives a speech to rouse the troops: Peroz is letting his emotions get the better of him. And, following Belisarius' and Hermogenes' discussion of the importance of generalship for the outcome of war, we can see here that by letting his emotions overcome his reason he is leading his troops to defeat,<sup>75</sup> a certainty given the place that leadership plays in Procopius' understanding of battle.<sup>76</sup>

In Peroz' exhortation he outlines six criteria essential for Persian success: 1 – the Persians must use their bravery (henceforth P1); 2 – the Romans are not usually orderly in their battle lines and so are unaccustomed to good order (P2); 3 – the Romans are scared because they do not dare line up for battle without a trench (P3); 4 – the Romans have misconstrued the situation, thinking that the Persians will not enter battle when that is clearly not the case (P4); 5 – if the Persians fight at close-quarters it will allow them to show off their martial superiority over the Romans (P5); 6 – it is better to be brave in battle, for if they are not brave, they might face some serious repercussions from the Persian king (P6). In the Roman counterpart Belisarius and Hermogenes lay out for their army

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<sup>75</sup> Peroz's namesake also let his emotions overcome him against the Ephthalites, and his actions foreshadowed the general Peroz's actions here.

<sup>76</sup> Champion (2004) too recognizes *logismos* on the field of battle in Polybius' *Histories* and considers it an important characteristic of a Hellene, the absence of which puts some person or group closer to, if not entirely in, the category of, barbarian. Procopius' use of historiographical *topoi* aside, the fact he does with some frequency call the Persians barbarians suggests that he feels that they have at least some barbarian qualities. I am very much convinced by Champion's arguments about Polybius' characterization of the Romans, and in light of that, I see a lot of similarities between Polybius' Romans and Procopius' Persians. By no means do I think that Procopius has a uniformly negative opinion of the Persians, but rather I think that he holds them up to a level nearly equal to that of the Romans. This is in keeping with the views recently expounded by Börm (2007: 90-275) on Procopius' heterogeneous picture of the Persians. When they act as they do here and let their emotions get the better of themselves, they move further to the barbarian side of the civilized/barbaric polarity. Of course, when the Romans act the same way, they too move further to the barbaric end. For the interplay between ethnography and historiography in late Antiquity see Greatrex (2000) and Maas (2003). On Roman identity and the Greek/barbarian polarity in late antiquity see Kaldellis (2007a: 120-188). Cf. Flower (2006) on Herodotus' characterization of the Persians.



six factors: 1 – the Persians are not invincible as the previous battle indicated, as it was the heedlessness of the commanders and not a lack of bravery that led to defeat (R1); 2 – the Romans now have an opportunity to set things right for their empire (R2); 3 – if the Romans follow orders, they will win (R3); 4 – the generals say that the Persian confidence largely rests with the assumption that the Romans will be disorderly (R4); 5 – they admit that the Persians have the numerical advantage, but their infantry is little more than a mass of farmers who are there to serve the soldiers, they lack the weapons that could cause trouble for the Romans, and the fact that they have huge shields only goes to show that they really are not all that brave (R5); 6 – if the Romans themselves are brave then they will overcome the Persians and teach them a lesson for their folly (R6).<sup>77</sup>

With these points raised, the battle begins.

Before the exhortations themselves were given, the Romans had already been following their commanders' precepts. When the second Persian attempts to bait the Romans in battle line, not one soldier bit and all stayed in line, save Andreas, whom Procopius tells us was, strictly speaking, not a soldier himself (1.13.30, R3 and R4 contra P2). Andreas' actions against his Persian opponents proved to be a great morale booster. He also provided proof, and in front of both armies, that the Romans are courageous (1.13.33, R6). What is more, even when one part of the Roman force is engaged in combat, as Buzes' and Pharas' wing is before the single combat of Andreas, they return to their original position after fending off the Persians (1.13.27, R3 and R4 contra P2). We see that the Persians are using their numbers to their advantage before the first volleying of arrows begins. They do not line up their entire army, but half so that they can constantly rotate in fresh troops, a luxury that the Romans do not have (1.14.28,

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<sup>77</sup> It is significant that Belisarius and Hermogenes do not contradict Peroz's assertion of Roman wrongdoing: they are not deceiving their men. What is more, the two generals also do not claim that the Persian invasion is unjust, which would be wrong, but pass the matter over entirely. This is to cast Belisarius, and to a lesser degree Hermogenes, as an honest man; this personal trait sticks with Belisarius throughout the *Wars*.

R6). The battle opens with missile fire. The Persians are not scared and do enter the battle, seemingly undeterred by what had transpired earlier (1.14.35, P3). When both sides run out of missiles, the battle moves to close-quarters and the Persians start to gain the advantage over the Roman left flank (1.14.37, P5). But, the Romans use their trench and arrangement quite effectively, and the attack is soon repulsed, the barbarians return to their line, and many are slaughtered. The use of the trench in this scene was not because a lack of bravery – which the Romans demonstrated with the lack of hesitation with which the supporting units charged the Persians – but in order to help the Romans overcome their numerical deficiency (R6 contra P3); moreover, this could only have worked if the Romans followed orders, which they did (R3). In the second phase of the battle, when the standard falls, it is the Persians who are afraid and thus flee in terror (1.14.50-52, contra P1 and P6). As a result of these factors the Romans did something remarkable, “for on that day the Persians were defeated in battle, which had not happened for a long time”.<sup>78</sup> Because the Romans were able to do what was prescribed in their exhortation, they won. For Procopius Belisarius and Hermogenes had a better grasp of the situation than Peroz.

### **The Sudden Reversal**

Now I shall look briefly at the sudden reversal (*peripeteia*), a common enough element, which features in Procopius’ descriptions and serves an important role. Procopius betrays on occasion an interest in morality and tragedy in his narratives of battle and the *peripeteia* is a key marker of that interest. As with some of the other battles and sieges discussed, in the Battle of Dara we find the sudden reversal, only it is rather more complex than the simple pattern of momentum and success, sudden change, and momentum shift and reversal. The momentum ebbs and flows as the two armies clash throughout the

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<sup>78</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.54.

narrative.<sup>79</sup> When we leave the opening single combats involving Andreas, the Romans have surely gained the momentum after entering the battle from a relatively inferior position. By the time the main part of the fighting has begun the Romans find themselves struggling against the Persian missile onslaught and the momentum has shifted again, only this time in the Persians' favour. Another reversal comes when Pharas and his Herul contingent spring on the unsuspecting Persian troops.<sup>80</sup> At the end of this stage the Romans have regained their lost momentum, though the Persians are not to be undone: Peroz now sends in his Immortals and they manage to push back the Roman troops under Simmas and Ascan.<sup>81</sup> With the momentum seemingly in the Persians' favour Belisarius and Hermogenes send in reinforcements under Sunicas and Aigan, whose critical actions turn the battle decisively in the Romans' favour. And, thanks to Belisarius' and Hermogenes' tactical awareness and quick reactions, the Romans win an unprecedented victory.

In the Battle of Oinochalakon we find Sittas at the helm for the Romans.<sup>82</sup> It is not the Persians, however, whom the Romans face in this battle but the Armenians. The Armenians in question had rebelled against the Romans and one of Sittas' first actions was to win them over through persuasion. Sittas's words – conveyed through letters – seemed to win over one particular group but, by some chance (τύχῃ δέ τιτυ), there was a communication break down, the treaty was not ratified, and the two sides came to blows.<sup>83</sup> This abrupt change (*peripeteia*) brought an immediate end to the positive results that the Romans

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<sup>79</sup> The description of the Battle of Satala (1.15.9-17), which in the narrative follows closely on that of the Battle of Dara, also has several changes of momentum which is remarkable given its relative brevity. On the historical battle see Bury (1923: 85), who believes that this battle would have been accorded great fame had it not been overshadowed by Dara. Procopius', and/or Belisarius' possible absence may also play a role in the battle's marginalization. Cf. Rubin (1957: 369-370), Greatrex (1998: 185-189), Greatrex and Lieu (2002: 91), and Syv anne (2004: 434).

<sup>80</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.37-40.

<sup>81</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.44-45.

<sup>82</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.3.8ff. This battle is discussed briefly by Syv anne (2004: 440). Cf. Rubin (1957: 381-382).

<sup>83</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.3.16.

had attained. Sittas had managed to win over some Armenians through peaceful means and they seemed to be about to avoid further conflict;<sup>84</sup> he had acted quite sensibly. With this unexpected problem, however, things change, and Sittas now becomes run by his emotions, much like Peroz at Dara, and he loses his sense of reason.<sup>85</sup> This misfortune dogs Sittas throughout the Battle at Oinochalakon and he is struck down in an accident with a Herul soldier.<sup>86</sup>

### **God, Morality, and the *Urbs Capta***

Sieges are quite different creatures from pitched battles and this is borne out by Procopius' descriptions of sieges during the *Persian Wars*. During the Persian campaigns it is usually the Persians who are carrying out the siege. And, just as the elements of a siege are different from those of a pitched battle, so too in many cases is how those sieges are to be explained. In other words, the "why" of a Procopian siege is often different from that of a Procopian pitched battle and in this section I want to highlight some of the "whys" of a Procopian siege. In addition, I also want to point out how an individual siege fits into the narrative as a whole. The role of women, and the *peripeteia* (discussed in the context of pitched battles above), also merit some discussion here, as does the *urbs capta*, and as such on occasion I shall have recourse to refer to those features. To do all of this I am going to be selective and focus on Antioch.

The siege of Antioch has attracted more attention by scholars than most other aspects of the *Persian Wars*.<sup>87</sup> In my analysis God plays a big role, but contra Cameron I do not take Procopius' reference to the hand of God as a

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<sup>84</sup> This is something that Belisarius had countenanced earlier in his first joint letter to Peroz in the Battle of Dara. For Belisarius and Hermogenes an able general brings peace from war (1.14.2).

<sup>85</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.3.19.

<sup>86</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.3.21-29.

<sup>87</sup> On the siege see Bury (1923: 96-98), Stein (1949: 489-490), Rubin (1957: 384-387), Downey (1953: 342-344), Whitby (1989: 539), Evans (1996b: 156-157), Greatrex and Lieu (2002: 104-105), and Syv anne (2004: 503).

statement of blind faith,<sup>88</sup> and contra Kaldellis I do not think that the contradiction between God and Tyche is necessarily problematic.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, I think that we can move closer towards understanding Procopius' focus on God if we consider that one of the themes which Procopius develops throughout the *Persian Wars* pertains specifically to his descriptions of battle. Procopius' *Wars* is partly a didactic work, and one of his aims is to present his readers with historical *exempla* so that they might know how to act when confronted with similar situations to those described. We have started to see how this runs through the *Persian Wars*, particularly as regards the dichotomy between the Romans in pitched battles and the Persians in sieges. The Persians are better at sieges, both historically and historiographically. For Procopius if the Romans want to withstand a fierce Persian assault they need the assistance of God. This is how the Romans manage to survive the siege of Edessa. In that description, even though Procopius is not as explicit as Evagrius is in ascribing its survival to God, the fact remains that he does.<sup>90</sup> Now what makes the description of the sack of Antioch unique is Procopius' reference to God in a narrative in which He does not lend a helping hand. What Procopius seems to be concerned with here

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<sup>88</sup> Cameron 1985: 117.

<sup>89</sup> Kaldellis 2004a: 204-206. Cf. Whitby (2007d: 83-87).

<sup>90</sup> Although Procopius does not refer to an image as Evagrius does in his description of the siege of Edessa, he does subtly attribute the city's salvation to the work of God. At 2.12.7 Procopius says that Khusro is determined to take the city because its citizens are convinced that the city has divine protection. The story of Abgar follows, and as soon as the scene draws to a close, and Procopius returns to a summary of Khusro's actions leading up to the siege, he notes that the Persians had trouble even reaching the city: God is already helping the Edessene cause (2.12.32). In the next chapter Procopius refers to the sack of Antioch and singles out the pious behaviour of the residents of Edessa: pious people are not likely to feel the wrath of God (2.13.3) A few lines later, and after an *analepsis* in which Procopius refers to the desire of Kavad to capture the city, he singles out a certain priest named Baradotos from Constantina, "a just man and especially loved by God" (2.13.13). Again, the implication is that one loved by God is not likely to suffer the same fate as a sinner (or sinners in the case of Antioch) for Constantina too was spared a siege. Khusro fails in this siege and when he tries again four years later Procopius explicitly tells us that the Persians are defeated because of God (2.26.3). So, the only way that the Romans can survive a siege undertaken by the Persians is with the assistance of God, and although Procopius has not referred to any images as Evagrius did for his conflated description of the siege, he too believes that God played a decisive role. Cf. Whitby 2000e: 323-326.

is the severity of the sack, which is in marked contrast to those other sieges he has described in which the cities fell. Let us now see exactly how God figures in this description.

The siege starts much like many of the other ones found in the *Persian Wars*. Khusro and the army arrive at the city and prepare for the siege after their diplomatic overtures fail.<sup>91</sup> Procopius then intervenes in the narrative by telling us, through a counterfactual, that more of the inhabitants would have left the city had not the commanders of the troops in Lebanon arrived.<sup>92</sup> After they have arrived and prepared their camps, the Persians try again to persuade the Antiochenes to pay-off their would-be attackers. The response, however, is less than favourable for Khusro and his forces; the residents clearly have no intention of handing over such a significant amount of money. What is more, the Antiochenes engage in behaviour that is all too reminiscent of the prostitutes at Amida.<sup>93</sup> These acts may have been typical parts of a siege, and so what is significant here is his attempt to highlight this again. In regard to those at Amida he says “...καὶ τινες ἑταῖραι ἀνελκύσασαι **κόσμῳ οὐδενὶ** ἐσθήτα Καβάδῃ ἄγχιστά που ἐστηκότι ἐδείκνυον ὅσα τῶν γυναικῶν γυμνά φανῆναι ἀνδράσιν **οὐ θέμις**”,<sup>94</sup> whereas in regard to those at Antioch he says “...πολλὰ ἐς τὸν Χοσρόην **ὑβρίζον** τε ἀπὸ τῶν ἐπάλξεων καὶ ζὺν γέλῳτι **ἀκόσμῳ** ἐτώθαζον”.<sup>95</sup> We are reminded of al-Mundhir’s speech to Khusro at 1.17.36-38 in which he also noted the luxurious lifestyle of the residents. In this second passage Procopius tells us that the Antiochenes are not terribly serious and that they are engaged in trivial

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<sup>91</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.8.1.

<sup>92</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.8.2.

<sup>93</sup> Again they are heaping their insults upon the Persian shah specifically and not, at least in Procopius’ account, the Persian forces. It is very much Khusro himself who is attacking the city.

<sup>94</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.7.18. cf. Procop. *Wars* 1.7.17.

<sup>95</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.8.6.

things; in the first he more or less tells us what those activities are.<sup>96</sup> All in all, the behaviour of the Antiochenes is not only shameful, but it leaves them unprepared for the siege: the city and its people have reached such great heights of prosperity that they are ripe for a fall. Again, as with the siege of Amida, the disgraceful actions enrage the attacking shah, here Khusro, and only impel him to capture the city.<sup>97</sup>

Unfortunately for the Romans, but fortunately for Khusro and the Persians, the shocking behaviour of the populace does not subside, even as the assault intensifies. Eventually the momentum begins to swing in favour of the Persians and the defenders start to panic, and without the safety of secure fortifications, their courage dissipates.<sup>98</sup> The soldiers immediately retreat when they hear a crash as they assume, because of their inability to comprehend the situation, that the towers have collapsed. Ironically enough, the only citizens who stay and fight at this stage are those who had been involved in factional strife, and for Procopius hardly the most reputable in a city of sinners and cowards.<sup>99</sup> At this stage, after singling out the defence of the young men, Procopius returns to the spineless soldiers, and the many men, women, and children, who can think of nothing else but escape.<sup>100</sup> Although Procopius does not censure the women and children, he most certainly does the men who flee with the women, and the soldiers who trample them in flight.<sup>101</sup> Even here, when the people should be working together they can think of nothing but themselves and the only ones

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<sup>96</sup> At 1.17.37 al-Mundhir says: οὐ γὰρ ἄλλου οὐδενὸς τῷ ταύτης δῆμῳ ὅτι μὴ πανηγύρεών τε καὶ τρυφῆς μέλει καὶ τῆς ἐν θεάτροις αἰεὶ πρὸς ἀλλήλους φιλονεικίας; at 2.8.6 Procopius says: εἰσὶ γὰρ οὐ κατεσπουδασμενοί, ἀλλὰ γελοίοις τε καὶ ἀταξίᾳ ἱκανῶς ἔχονται.

<sup>97</sup> Another significant feature, which I have omitted, is the departure from the city of the Bishop Ephrem.

<sup>98</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.8.16.

<sup>99</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.8.17. Procopius had described the Nika Revolt earlier at 1.24.1ff and though there may have been other forces at play in that incident, it is hard to deny that Procopius felt that a considerable amount of the blame rested on the members of the factions. Cf. Cameron 1985: 166-167; Greatrex 1997; and Kaldellis 2004: 123-126.

<sup>100</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.8.18.

<sup>101</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.8.19.

willing to stand up are young ruffians. At 2.8.23 Procopius interrupts the narrative to remind us that the city was the jewel of the East: its reverse (*peripeteia*) and fall were therefore imminent. Zaberganes' comments are illustrative of the Antiochenes' immorality: "...but you wish to show mercy upon those who are not worthy of being saved, and are eager to spare those who by no means want it".<sup>102</sup> The sack that comes is quite brutal and at 2.8.35 the Antiochenes have been reduced to a wretched state.<sup>103</sup>

At the start of chapter 9 Khusro gives a speech to the ambassadors of the city following which Procopius says: "for he was the cleverest of all men at saying that which is not, in concealing the truth".<sup>104</sup> This comment suggests that Procopius is telling us that we are not to take at face value some of the things that Khusro has said. Indeed, Procopius then goes off on a tirade against the Persian shah. Yet, Khusro does actually make four interesting comments: God does not give the good without the bad,<sup>105</sup> that "because of this we do not have laughter without tears";<sup>106</sup> "that I captured this city without any trouble, which in reputation and in reality is especially noteworthy and is in land of the Romans, and I gained victory after God acted offhand, as you doubtless see",<sup>107</sup> and that "the suffering Antiochenes are the cause of this, for when the Persians were

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<sup>102</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.8.31.

<sup>103</sup> At the end of chapter 8 Procopius tells us a story about two illustrious Antiochene women who fled the city when they perceived that it was doomed. They are afraid of being captured and raped by the Persian sackers and flee into the river Orontes and disappear. As we have seen women always play a conspicuous role in Procopian sieges, much as they do in many other historians. Their inclusion is interesting. Women had played a minor role in this narrative; perhaps the only significant thing to note here is that whereas earlier the Roman defenders had failed to perceive the gravity of their situation (2.8.16), it is only when all is lost that it dawns on some of the citizens what is transpiring. Thus, one might suggest that their awareness of the situation mirrors that of the reader who now, once the significant events have passed, can see that it was their immoral behaviour that led to their downfall.

<sup>104</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.9.8.

<sup>105</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.9.1.

<sup>106</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.9.2. We are reminded of the laughing which the populace engaged in when they were mocking Khusro when he arrived: they had the laughter (2.8.6), now they have the tears.

<sup>107</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.9.3.



storming the walls they were not able to push them back".<sup>108</sup> The first comment is true and the clever Khusro has opened his speech by saying something that is what he says it is; the second comment is also true and it fits in well with the first. The last two points that I have highlighted are the more interesting bits for it is here that Khusro speaks in the manner that Procopius says he does. In the preceding narrative it is quite clear that this Persian victory was not easy, and in at least two spots the action was both intense and evenly balanced.<sup>109</sup> God did give the Persians victory, and in this Khusro is certainly right, but the Antiochenes do not realize this, and that is where he deceives. In the last comment Khusro says that the citizens are the cause of the horrors that Khusro has unleashed and again he is being deceptive. Yes, the Antiochenes are the cause of the troubles which befall them, but it is not, strictly speaking, for the reason that Khusro states, and is in fact, as we the readers now know, due to the wrath of God at their immoral actions.<sup>110</sup> If we jump ahead to chapter 10 we find Procopius' extensive intervention about the calamity that struck Antioch. Taken alone, and out of context, it suggests that, just as Procopius claims, he (Procopius) does not understand why God raised a man or place and then brought it down for no apparent reason.<sup>111</sup> But we have just seen Procopius provide us with all the interpretive tools that we need to understand what might not be openly apparent to us, the audience.<sup>112</sup> After all, in the preface he does tell us that he decided to write the *Wars*, at least in part, in order to provide some insight for those future readers who find themselves in a similar predicament.<sup>113</sup> Although it might seem inexplicable at the time, with the help of Procopius' text these sorts of events will

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<sup>108</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.9.5.

<sup>109</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.8.9-12; Procop. *Wars* 2.8.28-29.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Whitby 1989: 538.

<sup>111</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.10.4.

<sup>112</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.10.4.

<sup>113</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.1.2.

become clear to future readers, and, in the face of similar problems, they now know how to act appropriately.

The *urbs capta* was a stock literary motif throughout antiquity, and it features in the sack of Antioch.<sup>114</sup> At the end of Procopius' description we find some of the stock elements of an *urbs capta*, and by proxy a reference to the *iliupersis*. Khusro orders the army to enslave the survivors,<sup>115</sup> and to burn the city.<sup>116</sup> We do not get many references to blood and wounds, though there is one notable exception in a speech given by Khusro.<sup>117</sup> Instead of generic masses of lamenting women and children Procopius focuses on one particular woman and her child, in a pathetic scene in which the ambassador, Anastasius, is himself brought to tears.<sup>118</sup> A Procopian innovation is his personal interjections in which he openly addresses his audience to convey his own expressions of horror at what had happened.<sup>119</sup> It is in this discussion of the *urbs capta* that we can see Procopius successfully setting his work into the historiographical tradition, though not slavishly, for he also puts his own stamp on the events and the writing of history.

### **Part III: The Excitement of Battle**

The importance of the preface for Greek historiography has long been recognized. It sets a work in a particular genre thereby providing the interpretive framework with which the reader can understand it. As Champion has noted, it has another function: it grabs the reader's attention.<sup>120</sup> Once an historian had

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<sup>114</sup> Paul 1982, Rossi 2004: 17-53. On the relationship between history and tragedy see Rutherford (2007). On the historical experience of a siege in late antiquity see Lee (2007a: 123-146). On Persian actions after the capture of a city see Börm (2007: 171-177).

<sup>115</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.9.14.

<sup>116</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.9.17ff.

<sup>117</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.9.4.

<sup>118</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.9.9-10.

<sup>119</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.10.4.

<sup>120</sup> Champion 2004: 1.

grabbed his reader's attention, however, he had to keep it. In what follows I shall discuss some of the ways that Procopius strove to keep his readers' attention in his battle descriptions.

### **Narrative Pace**

One way to keep the readers' attention was to vary the narrative's pace, so making the story more exciting. Procopius quite often plays with the narrative pace of his descriptions of battle in the *Persian Wars*; the same applies to sieges. In this analysis I shall look at the full narrative of the Battle of Callinicum to show how Procopius changes the pace throughout an entire description of battle, and one scene from the Battle of Anglon to show how Procopius changes the pace in greater detail by focusing on one passage from a campaign.

Procopius opens the Battle of Callinicum with a summary of preparations for the invasion, and over the first few lines the pace moves at a pretty constant rate.<sup>121</sup> However, there is soon a pause as Procopius intervenes to comment on the uniqueness of the invasion, at least as regards its route.<sup>122</sup> While Procopius is saying this the action cannot proceed. The intervention is brief and soon Procopius is again summarizing the action, only now Procopius' gaze has shifted to Belisarius and he has included an ellipse between the last point described about the Persians, and Belisarius receiving the news.<sup>123</sup> The Romans were certainly not idle in the interval, and something must have happened between the summary given through the gaze of Kavad, Procopius' pause, and the resumption of the summary through the gaze of Belisarius. Even when the summary does resume, the pace is not what it had been at the start of the campaign: there is a delay before the action proceeds; Belisarius is unsure about how to proceed and so at first does nothing. Once he makes up his mind the

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<sup>121</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.1.

<sup>122</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.3.

<sup>123</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.4.

action accelerates and then continues apace. There is another pause only a couple of lines later with Procopius again the omniscient narrator describing the Roman troop deployment.<sup>124</sup> The narrative then resumes and the Roman use of Fabian tactics is described.<sup>125</sup> There is another pause in the narrative when Procopius briefly tells us about Easter.<sup>126</sup> The narrative moves forward again once Belisarius realizes that trouble is brewing in his army and he calls them together to give an exhortation.<sup>127</sup> The next few lines are occupied with Belisarius' speech,<sup>128</sup> and the pace slows down considerably as the general attempts to calm his unruly troops. Following the first exhortation there is more summary, though it is fairly detailed as Procopius tells us about the near mutiny of the Roman troops, and Belisarius' shock, which results in a change of plans.<sup>129</sup> Before the narrative has a chance to pick up, Procopius describes for us the arrangement of the Roman troops.<sup>130</sup> The narrative then shifts to the Persians and through the gaze of Azarethes their actions are summarized, though briefly,<sup>131</sup> before Azarethes' exhortation.<sup>132</sup> Once the short Persian exhortation has ended the fighting begins.<sup>133</sup>

Procopius does not include many details in his summary of the exchange of missiles once the combat itself begins; in addition, the narrative soon grinds to yet another halt as Procopius intrudes to tell us the difference between Roman and Persian archers.<sup>134</sup> Following this most recent of Procopius' pauses there is another ellipse. Surely a considerable amount of time had passed between the commencement of combat, and its requisite summary which included a vague

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<sup>124</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.5-8.

<sup>125</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.8-15.

<sup>126</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.15.

<sup>127</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.16.

<sup>128</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.17-23.

<sup>129</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.24-25.

<sup>130</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.26.

<sup>131</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.27.

<sup>132</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.28-29.

<sup>133</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.30-31.

<sup>134</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.32-35.

reference to valorous deeds, and the reference to two-thirds of the day having passed immediately following Procopius' intervention. The fighting must have continued and it may have included some instances of single combat, for example. In the next few lines of the battle there are no pauses, although the amount of detail given varies from scene to scene. So, for example, at 1.18.37 Procopius tells us that the Romans had grown weak by what was presumably late afternoon. A few lines later Procopius describes the actions of some individual combatants such as Ascan, Belisarius, and Peter.<sup>135</sup> All in all this brief discussion shows that Procopius varies the pace rather considerably over the course of a description of battle. He frequently alternates between brief summaries of what would presumably have been quite time-consuming actions, such as the marching of the troops at the beginning of the battle, and then the constant tarrying of the Romans a little later; pauses, where Procopius tells us things like the uniqueness of one part of the engagement, or the difference in efficiency of the respective archers; and *ellipses*, where Procopius skips over entire events as he does when the fighting begins. Thus, Procopius uses *ellipses*, summaries, descriptions of scenes of varying detail, and pauses over the course of his battle narratives to vary the pace in the *Persian Wars*.

Now I turn to one passage from the Battle of Anglon. At the beginning of the battle Narses is angry, having been convinced that his men had let the Persians escape. So, he takes off with his army, and eventually they line up against and engage their Persian opponents. Unfortunately, at least for the Romans, the battle later turns in the Persians' favour, with Narses' death spurring a devastating attack from Naved. Roman and allied troops start falling and soon are turned to flight. Heretofore, Procopius had been narrating at a fairly moderate pace, with some of the changes that we saw in the Battle of Callinicum.

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<sup>135</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.41-43.

Yet, towards the end of Procopius' description, when the momentum has shifted in the Persians' favour, the pace accelerates rapidly:

But the Romans did not withstand the enemy and they all fled as fast as they could, neither thinking of defending themselves nor did they have in mind any venerable or any other noble thing. But the Persians suspecting that they had not in fact turned in ignoble flight, but that they were preparing to use some ambushes against them, pursued them as far as the rough ground and then turned back, not daring to fight a decisive battle on level ground a few against many. The Romans, however, and in particular all the generals, thinking that the enemy were still pursuing them fled even faster, stopping for nothing, and they were urging on their horses as they ran with a whip and a cry, and throwing their breast plates and other weapons in haste and confusion to the ground. For they did not have the courage to array themselves against the Persians if they overtook them, but they placed their hopes of safety in their horses' feet alone and, to sum it all up, the flight became such that hardly any one of their horses survived, but when they stopped running, they fell down right away and died.<sup>136</sup>

Ῥωμαῖοι δὲ οὐκ ἐνεγκόντες τοὺς πολεμίους ἀνὰ κράτος ἅπαντες ἔφευγον, οὔτε ἀλκῆς μεμνημένοι οὔτε τινὰ αἰδῶ ἢ ἄλλο τι ἐν νῶ ἀγαθὸν ἔχοντες. Πέρσαι δὲ αὐτοὺς ὑποπτεύοντες οὐκ ἐσφυγὴν ἀναίσχυντον οὕτω τετράφθαι, ἀλλ' ἐνέδραις τισὶν ἐσ αὐτοὺς χρῆσθαι, ἄχρι ἐσ τὰς δυσχωρίας διώξαντες εἶτα ἀνέστρεφον, οὐ τολμῶντες ἐν τῷ ὁμαλεῖ ὀλίγοι πρὸς πολλοὺς διαμάχεσθαι. Ῥωμαῖοι μέντοι, καὶ διαφερόντως οἱ στρατηγοὶ πάντες, δίωξιν ἐπὶ σφᾶς αἰεὶ ποιείσθαι τοὺς πολεμίους οἰόμενοι ἔφευγον ἔτι μᾶλλον, οὐδένα ἀνιέντες καιρὸν, θέουσι μὲν τοῖς ἵπποις ἐγκελευόμενοι μάστιγι καὶ κραυγῇ, τοὺς δὲ θώρακας καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ὄπλα ῥίπτοῦντες σπουδῇ τε καὶ θορύβῳ ἐσ ἔδαφος. οὐ γὰρ ἀντιτάξασθαι καταλάμβανουσιν αὐτοὺς ἐθάρσουν Πέρσαις, ἀλλ' ἐν μόνοις τοῖς τῶν ἵππων ποσὶ τὰς τῆς σωτηρίας ἐλπίδας εἶχον καὶ, τὸ ζύμπαν εἰπεῖν, τοιαύτη γέγονεν ἡ φυγὴ ὥστε τῶν ἵππων σχεδὸν τι αὐτοῖς οὐδεὶς διεβίω, ἀλλ' ἠνίκα τοῦ δρόμου ἐπαύσαντο, πεσόντες εὐθύς διεφθάρησαν.

The phrase “as fast as they could (ἀνὰ κράτος ἅπαντες)” comes in the first line which marks out this passage as one with a fairly high tempo.<sup>137</sup> Perhaps it is not surprising that flight is emphasized throughout a passage in which the fleeing Romans are described at length, but the constant reference to their flight, and the act of fleeing itself, both suggest a high pace.<sup>138</sup> Most of the episode is told

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<sup>136</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.25.29-32.

<sup>137</sup> *Ana kratos* is literally translated as “with all their strength”, but Dewing’s translation, adopted here, fits well with *e pheugon*, and helps convey the force of the Roman flight.

<sup>138</sup> The flight itself, or the act of fleeing, is referred to in each of the four lines that make up this passage.

through the gaze of the fleeing Romans themselves, which also keeps the pace high. So, we get phrases like “οὔτε ἀλκῆς μεμνημένοι οὔτε τινὰ αἰδῶ ἢ ἄλλο τι ἐν νῶ ἀγαθὸν ἔχοντες.” In the middle of the scene we learn that even the generals were consumed with fright because they believed that the enemy was still pursuing them: “δίωξιν ἐπὶ σφᾶς ἀεὶ ποιεῖσθαι τοὺς πολεμίους οἰόμενοι”. Thus, this was not simply a case of rash fear on the part of inexperienced and overzealous foot-soldiers, combined with poor leadership: there was more going on. Additionally, Procopius’ inclusion of the line regarding the Persian actions juxtaposed with the lines pertaining to the Roman actions serves to accentuate not only their desperation, which we see is ill-founded, but the madness which resulted too: these factors contribute to the fast pace. The actions of the Romans is another major contributor to the tempo; in the middle of the scene we find out that the Romans had not slowed their mad dash, but were “fleeing still faster (ἔφευγον ἔτι μᾶλλον)”. Towards the end of the passage the Romans start throwing off their armour: “τοὺς δὲ θώρακας καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ὄπλα ῥίππουντες σπουδῇ τε καὶ θορόβῳ ἐς ἔδαφος.” In the end, the mad dash for safety leads to a complete disregard for the very creatures that were helping the Romans to escape what they feared was certain death. So: “τοιαύτη γέγονεν ἡ φυγὴ ὥστε τῶν ἵππων σχεδὸν τι αὐτοῖς οὐδεὶς διεβίω”. In those actions described by Procopius and just noted, it is in many cases the rhythm of the words themselves that increase the pace. Finally, Procopius also uses tricolon crescendo to increase the pace. At 2.25.31 there are two consecutive tricolon crescendos. In the first half of the line we get: “**The Romans, however,** (Ῥωμαῖοι μέντοι),” then, “**and in particular all the generals** (καὶ διαφερόντως οἱ στρατηγοὶ πάντες),” and at last, “**thinking that the enemy were still pursuing them fled even faster** (δίωξιν ἐπὶ σφᾶς ἀεὶ ποιεῖσθαι τοὺς πολεμίους οἰόμενοι ἔφευγον ἔτι μᾶλλον),”.

The second half of the line is structured almost identically to the first: “**stopping for nothing** (οὐδένα ἀνιέντες καιρὸν),” then, “**and they were urging on their horses as they ran with a whip and a cry** (θέουσι μὲν τοῖς ἵπποις ἐγκελευόμενοι μάστιγι καὶ κραυγῇ),” and finally, “**and throwing their breast plates and other weapons in haste and confusion to the ground** (τοὺς δὲ θώρακας καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ὄπλα ῥίπποῦντες σπουδῇ τε καὶ θορύβῳ ἐς ἔδαφος).” Thus, Procopius also employs a number of different tools within individual passages to increase the pace beyond those identified for battles as a whole.

### **Foreshadowing**

Foreshadowing can also be used by an author to spur his reader on. There is one significant example of foreshadowing used by Procopius in the *Persian Wars*, and it is found in the Battle of Dara. After the opening skirmish a lone young Persian approaches the Roman line and challenges the soldiers arrayed to a single combat.<sup>139</sup> The only person who accepts is Andreas, a bath attendant of Buzes, and he successfully defeats the young Persian. Then, another older Persian approaches the Roman line and goads them as well, but Andreas defeats him too. Both of Andreas’ victories result in the death of the Persian combatant. Somewhat surprisingly, modern commentators have not recognized the literary character of these single combats. Greatrex summarizes Procopius’ account of the single combat, as does Haldon.<sup>140</sup> Syv anne simply says that there were a number of single combats.<sup>141</sup> Yet, this part of the narrative is more than mere narrative. Malalas’ version of the battle, which many scholars believe is based on official documents, makes no mention of an Andreas;

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<sup>139</sup> See Trombley’s (2002: 246-247) brief comments about single combat during the reign of Heraclius..

<sup>140</sup> Greatrex 1998: 177; Haldon 2001: 32.

<sup>141</sup> Syv anne 2004: 461.



moreover, although a single combat is referred to, it happens at a different stage of the battle.<sup>142</sup> In addition, although these cases of single combat are rather reminiscent of the many found in Homer's *Iliad*, this is not just a case of Procopius playing homage to Homer, for they in fact foreshadow the outcome of the battle at large. After the exhortations when the battle begins, there are two main Persian attacks. In the first phase Peroz keeps half of the Persian forces at bay, and then commences the assault.<sup>143</sup> The Romans manage to repel this attack; so, Peroz decides to send in his crack troops, the considerably more-experienced Immortals. However, their charge is also repelled, and the Romans win the battle with the two sides retiring just as they had following Andreas' single combats. So, not only do the two parts of the single combat episode match the principal parts of the battle at large, so does the relative experience of the different attackers, and the proportion of attackers.<sup>144</sup>

### **Perceptions and Access to Information**

Another way that Procopius builds tension is by restricting a character's access to certain details in a narrative; this skews the perceptions of that character. At the same time the readers are kept abreast of what is happening, or about to happen, and it is this discrepancy between the respective perceptions of the situation that builds tension, particularly when we, the readers, know that something bad, such as the sack of a city, is about to happen.<sup>145</sup> In his

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<sup>142</sup> Malalas 18.50.

<sup>143</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.28ff.

<sup>144</sup> I am not denying the existence of single combats altogether, even in this battle, but am pointing to the deliberate literary exploitation of their narration. Cf. Wheeler (2007: 194-203) for single combat in Archaic Greek warfare, Lendon (2007: 507ff.) for Hellenistic and Republican warfare, and Rance (2007a: 376-377) for late antiquity.

<sup>145</sup> To a certain degree this might have been the case for many of Procopius' contemporary readers on a different level for they may have known what had happened before reading the *Wars*. What I want to highlight here, however, is those instances where Procopius explicitly alerts us of this discrepancy between what one set of characters perceives about the situation, and another group of characters perceives about that same situation. The numbers vary, and so here the discrepancy is between

description of the siege of Sura Procopius tells us both Khusro's emotional state and what he was thinking about when he had his meeting with the bishop.<sup>146</sup> We learn that after the crying, the begging, and the promising of a healthy ransom, Khusro was still enraged at the people for not letting him into their city. Khusro manages to conceal his rage to the bishop, and Procopius again explains why.<sup>147</sup> Not only does he manage to conceal his true feelings, he manages to persuade the bishop that he will do them no harm. The bishop, along with some Persian courtiers, heads back to the city in what we the readers can only expect to be good spirits.<sup>148</sup> Procopius tells us in detail the role that the bishop's Persian companions are to play in the plot.<sup>149</sup> We now know the specifics of Khusro's ruse. These courtiers do as Khusro bids; at the same time the Persian troops advance to the walls.<sup>150</sup> At this point the citizens are completely unaware of what is about to happen: "When they came close to the fortifications, the Persians on the one hand, while saluting the bishop, stayed outside, while the residents of Sura, on the other hand, seeing that the man had become exceedingly happy, and that he was being attended with great honour by the enemy, forgot all their troubles and opened the entire gate and received the priest and his followers with much applause and shouting in praise".<sup>151</sup> At this juncture the Persians toss a stone to prevent the gates from closing, and it is only then that some residents of Sura, that is the guards, start to realize what is happening.<sup>152</sup> When the attack

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Khusro and the citizens of Sura. I should point out too that the reader always plays an important role in this.

<sup>146</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.5.13-17. On the siege of Sura (Sergiopolis) see Bury (1923: 93-95), Rubin (1957: 382-383), Greatrex and Lieu (2002: 103-104), and Syv anne (2004: 503).

<sup>147</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.5.15.

<sup>148</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.5.17.

<sup>149</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.5.18-19.

<sup>150</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.5.21.

<sup>151</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.5.21.

<sup>152</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.5.23-24.

comes it comes quickly (εὐθύς), and it is only when the slaughter ensues that the tension is released.<sup>153</sup>

#### **Part IV: Greek Military Theory and Procopius**

Now that we have seen how Procopius keeps his readers engaged with his narrative it is time to move on to how he explains the battles, and to return to the text's didactic function.

#### **Discipline, Confusion, and Disorder<sup>154</sup>**

Two factors which for Procopius are integral to a battle's outcome are the discipline of the respective armies and the order of the battle line.<sup>155</sup> There are a number of occasions where Procopius stresses the indiscipline and disobedience of the Roman army in battle; though he will also do this for other armies. Rather significantly, wherever indiscipline is presented as a problem in the *Persian Wars*, the discussion is invariably couched with some mention of a failure of leadership.

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<sup>153</sup> That does not mean that the reader's emotional engagement with the text ceases, as the citizens experience unspeakable horror at Khusro's hands.

<sup>154</sup> I discuss the material in this section at greater length in Whately (2008).

<sup>155</sup> Discipline is a multi-faceted term that encompasses the somewhat disparate issues of the obedience of soldiers in battle, and their willingness to hold the line in the face of enemy attacks; the actions of the soldiers towards the inhabitants of besieged cities and surrounding lands; and the obedience of the soldiers to their commanding officers, and here I am thinking about those places where disobedience to the soldiers' commander/s leads to mutinies. As this analysis is focused on the battle itself, it is only the former that is relevant to this discussion.

Nevertheless, neither the treatment of civilians nor the mutinies of soldiers are unimportant issues. The prevalence of the latter, at least its character during the Justinianic period, is to a certain degree misunderstood. Kaegi (1981) believed that the reign of Justinian ushered in a new age of military unrest and that from that period on it became firmly entrenched in late Roman society. The problem is, military unrest had always been a problem in the Roman state, and the sixth century was not necessarily any worse than any of the previous six centuries. Brian Campbell highlighted this important point in a paper given at a conference in Oxford (July 2, 2006). The major difference is that the sixth century authors are vocal about these uprisings while their counterparts from the Principate are conspicuously silent. There were several major mutinies caused by unrest among the troops: c. 66 BC (Pompey), 36 BC (Lepidus), AD 14 (Pannonia), AD 68-69 (Nero), AD 89 (Germania), AD 175 (Avidius Cassius), AD 192-193 (Septimius Severus), and AD 235 (Severus Alexander) to name but a few. Thus, the significant difference is not the appearance of the mutinies themselves in the sixth (and to certain degree late fifth) century, but the attitudes of those who described them. On discipline in the Republican and Imperial periods see Moore (2002) and Phang (2008). For some comments on the historiography of discipline in late antiquity see Whately (2008).

As we have seen this relationship between discipline and leadership is stressed in the first battle and this example provides a proto-type against which all commanders will be measured. Let us now examine some of the other descriptions.

In the Battle of Dara Procopius describes in considerable detail the Roman battle-line.<sup>156</sup> He also includes some information about these tactical manoeuvres which could only be effected through strict discipline. For example, after describing the left flank of the line, Procopius notes that Sunicas and Aigan with 600 horsemen were positioned on its right to support those troops should they be driven back.<sup>157</sup> To be effective the horsemen would have to attack en masse, which takes strict discipline; in addition, the timing itself would have been difficult. At the end of the battle-line description Procopius tells us that the Persians “were astounded at the good order of the Romans”.<sup>158</sup> The importance of order and discipline is even clearer in the battle exhortations.<sup>159</sup> Five of the six points emphasized by Peroz in his speech refer to the bravery of the Persians or Romans, and the good order, and lack of confusion, of the Roman troops. In the exhortation of Belisarius and Hermogenes, which is closely modelled on the speech of Peroz, the two Roman generals emphasize their own bravery and claim that the Persian confidence is false for it rests on the supposition that the Romans will be disorderly in battle. Once the fighting does begin the Romans manage to stay in control, and they are obedient to their commanders throughout the course of the battle, which surely contributed to their success.<sup>160</sup> This was even true when the Immortals are unleashed on the Roman right flank.<sup>161</sup> And, after putting the Persians to flight, they manage to stay in order and ignore the

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<sup>156</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.13.19-24.

<sup>157</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.39.

<sup>158</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.13.24.

<sup>159</sup> See the discussion of battle exhortations above pp 137-142.

<sup>160</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.34ff.

<sup>161</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.44-45.

temptation to pursue them.<sup>162</sup> Ironically, the one place where the Romans – or Roman in this case – show any disobedience comes in the second single combat involving Andreas, and it led to a tremendous boost in Roman morale. Andreas had been ordered not to repeat his actions against the younger Persian,<sup>163</sup> but he ignores this and meets, and defeats, his older adversary. In fact, in this battle it is the Persians who are confused and disoriented; at the end of the battle when Baresmanas' standard falls, "the barbarians become terribly afraid and no longer think of defending themselves, but flee while in much disorder."<sup>164</sup>

By the Battle of Callinicum the tune has changed and the Romans are quite disorderly and disobedient. It is the indiscipline of part of the Roman contingent that is the principal cause of all the trouble in this battle, despite the protestations of some scholars.<sup>165</sup> We are told from the beginning of this narrative that the Persians had been on the verge of defeat, but that the Roman troops grew restless: Belisarius has to take his men – and most of his officers as it turns out – aside and implore them to relax, as they were on the cusp of a bloodless victory. This fails and Belisarius is compelled to urge on his troops. By placing the discussion of indiscipline so early in the narrative, and by making it the impetus for the attack itself, Procopius is emphasizing this factor. Once the battle begins and it starts to go wrong following the withdrawal of the Arab federates and the eventual collapse of the Roman line, Procopius again returns to this issue of discipline.<sup>166</sup> We, the readers, are not to forget that the Romans had had victory in their hands. This hastily arrayed Roman battle-line – thanks to

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<sup>162</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.53.

<sup>163</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.13.35.

<sup>164</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.50.

<sup>165</sup> See in particular Cameron (1985: 125, 146-147, 158) and Shahīd (1995: 134-142). Greatrex (1998: 195-207) and Whitby (1992: 75-77) are quite right to lend more credence to Procopius' description of events than scholars such as Cameron or Shahīd have.

<sup>166</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.38-40.

the insubordination of Belisarius' men and his failure to deal with the situation - is in the end defeated by the Persians.

From the onset of the narrative of the Battle of Nisibis the Romans march with great order.<sup>167</sup> This is soon overshadowed, however, when we learn that there are some men who are less than enthusiastic about heeding Belisarius' orders.<sup>168</sup> Belisarius acts quickly to restore discipline and having summoned his men he says: "But I see that many of you are giving way to a great deal of disorder and that each man himself wants to be commander-in-chief of the war".<sup>169</sup> In fact, throughout this speech Belisarius is constantly playing up the contrast between disorder and order; in that same line just referred to Belisarius closes with: "when many in the army follow their own inclinations it is impossible for the army to do what it must". Despite Belisarius' best efforts, Peter disobeys and camps too close to the fortifications; moreover, Peter and his men end up "moving around in no order".<sup>170</sup> Not surprisingly, the Persians had been observing the Romans from the safety of their walls and when they catch sight of this, they charge out after them. When the two sides come to close-quarters confusion is added to the disorder and the unruly group seems doomed, just as Belisarius predicted it would, and they would have been defeated if Belisarius had not reacted well after anticipating such a calamity.<sup>171</sup> Although Belisarius had done well to anticipate the events – another notable quality for a general – he failed, for the second time, to keep his men disciplined in the stages immediately preceding battle. Peter is, however, even more culpable than Belisarius for not only did he disobey his commander, but he failed to discipline his own troops. Finally, in the Battle of Anglon the Romans encounter more problems when Narses' anger spreads throughout the whole army: "The troops broke camp,

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<sup>167</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.18.1.

<sup>168</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.18.4.

<sup>169</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.18.6.

<sup>170</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.18.16.

<sup>171</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.18.20.

accordingly, and without the guidance of generals and without observing any definite formation, they moved forward in complete confusion".<sup>172</sup> Their order is still not restored by the time that the fighting begins, for they line up in a disorderly fashion.<sup>173</sup> Procopius does seem to absolve them of much of the blame by saying that this disorderliness was due to the rough terrain.<sup>174</sup> Still, given that some of the same figures responsible for the disorder of the Battle of Nisibis are involved, such as Peter, it would seem that we, the readers, are to remember what had happened in that last battle. The Romans lose the battle, and additionally Narses loses his life. Order and discipline were key factors in Procopius' conception of battle in the *Persian Wars*, and in the battles discussed here, the onus fell on the commanders to maintain that discipline.<sup>175</sup>

### **The Psychology of Battle**

Psychology has a big role in battle for Procopius and there are a number of specific matters that surface fairly consistently. These include zeal, anger, bravery, and fear. Let us begin with zeal.

Eagerness to fight can be both a blessing and a curse in battle. Alone, it will not lead to defeat; but, when it is not checked, it can, in conjunction with factors such as disorder and disobedience, increase such a possibility. In the

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<sup>172</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.25.13.

<sup>173</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.25.17.

<sup>174</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.25.18.

<sup>175</sup> This connection between generalship and discipline is found in some other contemporary, or near contemporary, writers such as Agathias (1.6.19, 2.1.2, 2.9.1, 5.14.1-4), Syrianus (4.22), Maurice (passim, especially Maurice's preface), and Theophylact Simocatta (2.9.1, 2.9.14, 3.1.7-9, 3.12.6-7, 6.7.6-7, 8.6.2). Theophylact, for example, even begins his (*Universal*) *History* with a speech by the dying Tiberius II that includes a list of the characteristics of an ideal leader (1.1.14-21). Here the characteristics are intended for an emperor, but they can just as easily be applied to any significant leader, be he an emperor such as Maurice, or a general such as Priscus. Thus, much as the battle between Ephthalites and Persians in Procopius' *Persian Wars* serves as a template with which all following battles are to be compared, so this list serves as the template with which all emperors, and leaders, are to be compared (cf. Whitby 1988, and 1992). Of course, the key similarity among these authors is that they are all still part, or heavily influenced by, the classical tradition. This connection is notably absent among writers not writing in Greek, or traditional classical genres, such as Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, Pseudo-Zachariah of Mytilene, John Malalas, and Evagrius.

Battle of Dara, for example, the eagerness of Andreas in the single combat with his second Persian foe is paramount. Both men are quite eager to fight each other, yet Andreas is able to walk away victorious.<sup>176</sup> What is more, this zest for battle, which was channelled into a victory of sorts for the Romans, boosted the morale of the soldiers watching, manifested in the roar which erupted from the wall following his win.<sup>177</sup>

Anger, or something approximating anger, can be channelled to bolster one's morale; at the same time, it can also be disastrous. The Ephthalites are angry at their king in the first battle for letting the Persians get away with the trick involving the *proskynesis*.<sup>178</sup> He, however, is able to check that anger and the Ephthalite Huns win the battle. In that same battle Procopius presents us with the problem that arises when you have "a lot of anger towards the enemy":<sup>179</sup> the Persians are blinded by their rage, do not notice the stratagem employed by the Huns, and plunge to their deaths. In the Battle of Dara, after sending a young Persian to his death against Andreas, the angry Persians foolishly send another man to his death, though "they were pained by what happened".<sup>180</sup> In the Battle of Callinicum the Roman army becomes distressed at Belisarius' use of Fabian tactics: "The army insulted him neither among themselves nor in a corner, but they came shouting and called him soft and a destroyer of their zeal to his face, even some of the commanders committed these acts of depravity with the soldiers, and demonstrated their boldness with this".<sup>181</sup> Although Belisarius ends up changing his plan in an attempt to use this eagerness – Belisarius even claims in an exhortation that he was unaware how eager these troops were for battle – the Romans are later defeated. Sittas attempts to forge an alliance with the

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<sup>176</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.13.36.

<sup>177</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.13.38.

<sup>178</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.4.3.

<sup>179</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.4.12.

<sup>180</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.13.33.

<sup>181</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.24



Armenians in the Battle of Oinochalakon; but, there is a communication problem and some confusion results, which leads him to butcher some of the Armenian women and children.<sup>182</sup> We do not actually know if Sittas is angry, though Procopius alludes to the possibility; his later actions, however, suggest that this is the case. In that same battle Sittas' spear is shattered due to the carelessness of a Herul horseman. Sittas "was particularly distressed by this" and is then identified by the Armenians.<sup>183</sup> Sittas' actions give him away, which then leads to his death. The ill-fated Battle of Anglon gets off to a bad start when the Roman general Narses accuses his commanders of letting the Persians escape, and then lashes out at them for what he regards as insolence.<sup>184</sup> This, however, backfires, as it soon spreads to the rest of the army, who end up lashing out at each other. Hence, the Romans march off in disarray and this angst leads to a heedless charge, and a Persian ambush.

Courage, bravery, and fear all play a part in Procopian battles.<sup>185</sup> In the Battle of Satala the Romans find themselves outnumbered; but, Sittas uses a dust cloud stratagem to fool the Persians into thinking that it is they who are outnumbered by their attackers.<sup>186</sup> This deft move on Sittas' part frightens the Persians and contributes to the Roman victory; it also emboldens the Roman troops. The sight alone of the charge of part of the Roman army is enough to raise the morale and give them courage. When the Romans, though outnumbered, come charging down the hill against the Persians amassed below, their compatriots become invigorated and come charging out of the fortifications.<sup>187</sup> In the Battle of Callinicum, when Mundir and Azarethes, their

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<sup>182</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.3.18.

<sup>183</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.3.22.

<sup>184</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.25.11.

<sup>185</sup> For an interesting overview of the representation of courage in Roman literature see Harris (2006).

<sup>186</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.15.12.

<sup>187</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.15.13.

Saracen allies, learn the location of the enemy's position, they get scared and flee.<sup>188</sup>

Single combat and individual feats of bravery can boost morale.

Andreas' two victories in the Battle of Dara encourages the troops; his victory over the older Persian in particular rouses his comrades: "Then a roar went up from the wall and from the Roman army as great, if not greater, than before".<sup>189</sup> The bravery of the Thracian Florentius in the Battle of Satala also plays a huge role.<sup>190</sup> Indeed, Florentius' seizing of the standard adds to the Persian fear and this in turn leads to disorder and then defeat.<sup>191</sup> At the beginning of the Battle of Callinicum Procopius notes that many valorous deeds were performed.<sup>192</sup> A little later, Procopius singles out the actions of Ascan who, despite facing seemingly insurmountable odds, manages to hold out and kill numerous Persian notables.<sup>193</sup> Ascan's brave actions in turn persuade Belisarius to keep on fighting as long as Ascan holds out, despite the perilous situation that Belisarius himself is in.<sup>194</sup> Unfortunately for Ascan, he is later butchered by the Persians.<sup>195</sup> By the end of the battle confusion has settled in and the Romans find themselves in considerable trouble.<sup>196</sup> In the battle in the pass, before the Battle of the Phasis River, the heroic stand on the part of the 100-strong Roman garrison also boosts the morale for the Roman troops. Somehow they manage to hold off the whole of the Persian army at the pass, at least for a while. Although it did not immediately lead to victory, it is not long after that the Romans manage to expel the Persians from Lazica for good.<sup>197</sup> Although the scale here is smaller, Procopius is alluding

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<sup>188</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.9.

<sup>189</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.13.38.

<sup>190</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.15.15.

<sup>191</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.15.16.

<sup>192</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.31.

<sup>193</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.38.

<sup>194</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.41ff.

<sup>195</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.38. I should point out that Procopius adds "and with him 800 other men died having acted bravely in this predicament" (1.18.38).

<sup>196</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.48.

<sup>197</sup> That is, for good in the context of books 1 and 2 of the *Wars*.

to the Battle of Thermopylae in 480 BC, though it is less likely that he is specifically referring to the description of Herodotus.<sup>198</sup> Thus, the psychology of battle has an instrumental role in the outcome of a battle.

### **The Standard<sup>199</sup>**

The standard – or even a flag or banner – could be an important tool in battle. In the battle between Ephthalites and Persians the king’s banner is used as part of the stratagem to lure the Persians into the trench.<sup>200</sup> The seizing of an enemy’s standard in and of itself could both boost the morale of the party doing the seizing, and sink the morale of the one whose standard is seized. In the Battle of Satala Florentius leads a group of horsemen and, after charging the Persian line, he seizes the general’s standard and bends it to the ground.<sup>201</sup> This is an important moment: “For when the barbarians could no longer see the standard, they became quite disorderly and were consumed with fear and, having gone in their camp, they were silent, since many men fell in battle.”<sup>202</sup> When the Roman army manages to divide the Persian army in the Battle of Dara, it is not before the Persians see their standard bearer fall that they perceive what dire straits they are in.<sup>203</sup> Peter’s standard is captured in the Battle of Anglon.<sup>204</sup> The next day Procopius tells us that the Persians “set up on a tower instead of a trophy the standard of Peter”.<sup>205</sup> Admittedly, these events do not alter the battle’s momentum as the Romans are doomed from the onset of combat due to some other problems; still, this incident probably lowered the Roman morale at the moment when the arrival of Belisarius might have allowed them to salvage the

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<sup>198</sup> Hdt. 7.138-239.

<sup>199</sup> In this discussion I have included the use of flags and similar identification paraphernalia.

<sup>200</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.4.9.

<sup>201</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.15.15.

<sup>202</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.15.16.

<sup>203</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.47ff.

<sup>204</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.18.22.

<sup>205</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.18.26.

situation. After intercepting the advance party of 1,000 soldiers in the Battle of the Phasis River, the Romans hasten to the Persian camp and after overwhelming the dazed Persian soldiers, they take, among other things, their standards.<sup>206</sup>

### **The Stratagem and Military Trickery<sup>207</sup>**

A stratagem is a lot of things:

Cleverness, innovation, resourcefulness, deceit, trickery, seizing the proper moment for action – all encapsulated in the word 'stratagem' – came to represent a basic doctrine of ancient military theory; intelligence in generalship and the superiority of brains over brawn.<sup>208</sup>

Herodotus and Thucydides are both aware of the role of stratagem in warfare.<sup>209</sup>

And, with the change in the nature of warfare in late antiquity, it is perhaps not surprising to see Procopius' interest in stratagems.<sup>210</sup> From the first battle between the Persians and the Ephthalites Procopius highlights – though implicitly – the stratagem as an important factor in battle.<sup>211</sup> Before the Persian forces engage the Ephthalites in battle, the Huns build a trench which they then conceal. They also conceal their own forces. An advance party is sent to draw the attention of the Persian expeditionary force. The Persians see the advance party. The party then reverses and returns to the predetermined location, with the Persians in hot pursuit. When the Persians arrive they charge heedlessly into battle, thence the ditch, and hence to their deaths. Consequently, the Persians perish to a man. In the Battle of Satala the vastly outnumbered Romans use a dust cloud stratagem to make the Persians think that it is them who are

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<sup>206</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.30.44.

<sup>207</sup> For a good discussion of the stratagem in Classical Antiquity see Wheeler (1988a). For the sixth century see Syväne (2004: 282-290). Cf. the discussion of Lynn (2003: 12-25) and Gat (2005: 391-400, 505-508, 609-618).

<sup>208</sup> Krentz and Wheeler 1994: vi-vii.

<sup>209</sup> Krentz and Wheeler 1994: vii.

<sup>210</sup> Kaegi 1990: 63-64; Krentz and Wheeler 1994: xvi.

<sup>211</sup> See Kaegi (1990) and Lendon (1999) for, in the first case an overview of the stratagem and the nature of war and battle in Procopius; and Lendon for the Greek fondness for using stratagems in battle.

outnumbered.<sup>212</sup> In the Battle of Dara we find a stratagem similar to that employed in the first battle, and it shows that it need not be the commander-in-chief who provides the impetus to use a stratagem. Pharas comes up to Belisarius and Hermogenes and proposes taking his men, hiding with them on a slope, and then springing themselves on the unsuspecting Persians.<sup>213</sup> A similar stratagem is employed in the Battle of Satala. Sittas takes out 1,000 of his men and conceals them in the many hills surrounding the city, while Dorotheus is ordered to stay inside the fortifications at Satala until further notice.<sup>214</sup> After defeating the advance force of 1,000 Persians in the battle in the pass before the Battle of the Phasis River the Romans hurry to the Persian camp in the middle of the night.<sup>215</sup> The plan is to come upon them in the night and catch them unawares, which they do; this decisive battle ends the conflict in Lazica.<sup>216</sup>

### **Winning with Numbers**

Procopius may be vague concerning the actual reporting of numbers in his descriptions of battle, but this does not prevent him from emphasizing the importance of having more soldiers than your enemy. When Belisarius makes his exhortation towards dawn on the second day of the Battle of Dara, the fifth point that he makes is that the Persians are more numerous than the Romans.<sup>217</sup> It is significant that Procopius does not make Belisarius open the exhortation with a discussion of the army's numerical inferiority, but instead pushes their other strengths. When Belisarius does highlight the disadvantage, he claims that the Persian infantry is little more than a disorganized mass of farmers who are there

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<sup>212</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.15.12.

<sup>213</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.33, 14.39ff.

<sup>214</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.15.10.

<sup>215</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.30.40.

<sup>216</sup> In all of the previous battles in the *Persian Wars* that extended into the evening, the battle would either draw to a close, or the two sides would cease hostilities, when night fell. Thus, although such an attack would not be so unusual to the modern reader, that is exactly what it was to the ancient reader.

<sup>217</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.24.

to serve the Persian soldiers.<sup>218</sup> If we look ahead to the Battle of Callinicum we find that the situation is reversed: the Romans have the numerical advantage and under Belisarius' leadership are deftly employing Fabian tactics.<sup>219</sup> This state does not last, and Belisarius' officers and soldiers eventually grow restless.<sup>220</sup> As a result they force Belisarius' hand, the Romans engage the Persians, and walk away with a heavy defeat. A little earlier in the Battle of Satala, the Romans are greatly outnumbered; thus, Sittas decides against fighting the Persians on flat terrain, as that would put them at a disadvantage.<sup>221</sup> Finally, in the Battle of Anglon, Naved and the Persians manage to turn the tables against Narses and the Romans. What had been a disorderly Roman pursuit of the Persians turns into a mad Roman flight from the Persians. However, the pursuit only goes so far; Naved prevents his obedient soldiers from continuing beyond the rough terrain out of fear that that would make it a few against many on level ground.<sup>222</sup> Thus, for Procopius, numerical superiority is an important factor to consider when entering a battle, but a good commander can work around it.

### **Encirclement**

One further means of defeating a foe in battle – and described by Procopius – is getting behind the attackers. Encirclement is an important element in the Battle of Dara; we learn that the Persian skirmishers halt their attack on the Romans who have turned in flight.<sup>223</sup> Procopius tells us why he thinks they stopped: “But the Persians did not pursue them, but stayed put, fearing, I suppose, some move

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<sup>218</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.25.

<sup>219</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.9.

<sup>220</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.12-16.

<sup>221</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.15.11.

<sup>222</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.25.30.

<sup>223</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.13.25-26.

on the part of their foes to surround them."<sup>224</sup> When the central part of the battle commences, and the Roman left flank is pushed back by the Kadiseni, Pharas and the Heruls come charging down the hill and get behind them.<sup>225</sup> These Heruls, who were used in support, were to get behind the attackers;<sup>226</sup> it was their job to get behind the Persians so that they might become surrounded by both the troops of the left flank and the horsemen themselves. In the Battle of Callinicum the Persians manage to get behind the Roman cavalry.<sup>227</sup> This disaster only further deepens the Roman exhaustion and the surrounded troops turn and flee. These same soldiers come upon Belisarius and he struggles valiantly to prevent his group from being surrounded.<sup>228</sup> Sittas fights bravely in the Battle of Oinochalakon and it is only when an enemy combatant gets behind him that he is finally killed; this happens after he has already lost part of his scalp.<sup>229</sup> So, encirclement, when used effectively, can have a devastating effect in battle.

#### **Part V: The Characterization of Belisarius and Khusro**<sup>230</sup>

There are two figures who dominate the narratives of battle in the *Persian Wars*: Belisarius and Khusro. Although their historical importance is undeniable, and the prominent place in the narrative that Procopius affords them is certainly in part due to this fact, Procopius goes beyond mere reportage of the events and structures much of his narrative around those two men.<sup>231</sup> This is not surprising,

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<sup>224</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.13.26.

<sup>225</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.39.

<sup>226</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.39.

<sup>227</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.37.

<sup>228</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.44.

<sup>229</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.3.25.

<sup>230</sup> Space precludes a detailed treatment of both Belisarius and Khusro. My discussion will be selective and I shall only present a representative picture of Procopius' characterization of the two commanders, at least as regards their military qualities. Cf. Brodka (2004: 115-124).

<sup>231</sup> Throughout the *Wars* there are often two commanders who attract most of Procopius' attention: in much of the *Persian Wars* they are Belisarius and Khusro; in much of the *Vandal Wars* they are Belisarius and Gelimer; and in much of the *Gothic Wars* it is Belisarius and Vittigis, later Belisarius and Totila. Of course, there are other commanders who also occupy prominent positions in the narrative such as Solomon, and Narses.

for the individual had long been a big part of Greek literature and society, and great individuals such as Alcibiades and Brasidas had enraptured Procopius' Athenian forerunners centuries before.<sup>232</sup> Indeed, Procopius' interest in great individuals such as Belisarius has been recognized by his readers for some time.<sup>233</sup> Not only is Belisarius' role in Procopius' magnum opus recognized, so are his military accomplishments: the *Wars* of Procopius could be read as an extended essay on the generalship of Belisarius. The place of Belisarius and Khusro in the battle descriptions reflects the important role that Procopius saw commanders playing in the outcome of a battle.<sup>234</sup> Indeed, much of Belisarius' contemporary reputation, and the near legendary status he attained in the later Byzantine Empire, hinged on his generalship. Thus, in order to understand Procopius' own conception of how a battle worked we must also look at how he characterizes the leading commanders, especially Belisarius.

The *Persian Wars* mark the beginning of his career. With Belisarius in mind, it might well seem that the best way to describe Procopius' narrative style when it comes to battle is as a command-centred approach; however, that would

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<sup>232</sup> In some ways Procopius' structuring of his *Wars* around individuals anticipates the practice of later Byzantine historians such as John Kinnamos and Anna Komnene. As regards his predecessors, Arrian's account of the campaigns of Alexander is organized in a similar way. We saw in chapter two that some historiographical theorists advocated centring a work, or particular actions, around individuals.

<sup>233</sup> Rubin (1957), Cameron (1985), and Pazdernik (1997) among others have all recognized the central place which Belisarius occupies in the narrative. Scott (2006) discusses the changing place of Belisarius in Byzantine literature particularly from the ninth century to the fall of Constantinople and beyond. Even before modern scholars delved into the *Wars* ancient and medieval authors recognized the dominance Belisarius had over the action. Although we cannot say whether Syrianus ever read the *Wars*, he does refer to some of Belisarius' actions (33.35): "That is what Belisarius used to do [attack detachments of the enemy broken up because of lack of supplies]. When the enemy force was so large that he was unable to face up to it, he would destroy the provisions in the area before they appeared" (trans. Dennis). Evagrius, one of the first authors to explicitly refer to the *Wars* says the following: "...Procopius the *rhetor* in composing his history concerning Belisarius..." (Evag. *HE* 4.12, trans. Whitby). The bishop Photius opens his overview of Procopius with the words: "The history recounts what happened to the Romans in the reign of Justinian against the Persians and the Vandals and Goths, and especially what the general Belisarius did..." (Phot. *Bibl.* 63). The Suda entry for Procopius says something similar: "He wrote a Roman history, or rather the wars of the patrician Belisarius..." (Suid. Π 249).

<sup>234</sup> The dominance of the commanders in general may reflect Procopius' desire to write for his presumed audience, and it may reflect Procopius' sources. Such are the suggestions of Rance (2005: 429), who is concerned primarily with the Battle of Busta Gallorum.



be too simplistic.<sup>235</sup> Instead, I would suggest that for Procopius these generals also serve as symbols of the armies which they lead.<sup>236</sup> By focusing on Belisarius and his exploits on the field of battle, Procopius argues over the course of the Persian narrative that Roman success is tied to the field of battle. When Khusro is the focus of the attention the Persians are invariably successful, unless the Romans are fortunate enough to have God on their side as the Edessenes did. To defeat the Persians the Romans must try and meet the Persians in the field, rather than in siege warfare, when- and wherever possible. Indeed, the military didactic element of the *Wars* is perhaps no more clear than it is when Procopius characterizes Belisarius and Khusro.

The central part of the narrative can be divided into three sections all centred around Belisarius and Khusro. The first section focuses on Belisarius and the Romans in pitched battles, the second section on Khusro and the Persians in sieges, and the third on Belisarius versus Khusro in a mixture between battles and sieges. To borrow and modify the statement of Cameron, as regards warfare Procopius is utilizing the parallelism not of Justinian and Khusro, but rather Belisarius and Khusro.<sup>237</sup> During those same three sections Procopius spends comparatively little space characterizing the armies that those two commanders led. Belisarius makes his dramatic debut in the field at Dara.<sup>238</sup> In this first battle Belisarius and Hermogenes share responsibilities. Admittedly, this is in part because of the historical reality. Over the course of the narrative, however, the focus increasingly narrows on Belisarius. At the start the two

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<sup>235</sup> Kagan 2006: 7.

<sup>236</sup> See Champion (2004) for an intelligent discussion of those instances where Polybius presents the characteristics of a group, such as the Romans, in the body of an individual. My reading of Procopius' characterizations of Belisarius and Khusro is very much influenced by Champion's reading of Polybius. Gribble (1999: 167, 196) makes similar claims about Thucydides, and suggests places where Alcibiades is an historiographical spokesman for an historical theme.

<sup>237</sup> Cameron 1985: 166.

<sup>238</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.13.9ff.

generals share responsibilities.<sup>239</sup> Only a few lines later the focus begins to shift; when Peroz seeks out his foes he seeks out Belisarius.<sup>240</sup> In the midst of the exchange of letters Procopius seems to “forget” about those other generals with Belisarius.<sup>241</sup> This (the forgetting) happens one more time following Pharas’ suggestion to the commanders.<sup>242</sup> Despite Procopius’ emphasis on Belisarius he has not yet emerged as the dominant figure. Over the course of the fighting Procopius still refers to both commanders. What is clear from Dara, however, is that Belisarius has played an instrumental role in its outcome, though the congratulations must go to both Belisarius and Hermogenes.<sup>243</sup> Belisarius has not yet emerged as the dominant battlefield individual, though he is well on his way to doing so.

In the next battle in which he was engaged, namely the Battle of Callinicum, Belisarius performs rather poorly: just as the Roman army is not consistently successful, neither was Belisarius.<sup>244</sup> Before the engagement while the Persians are on their march back to their own territory the Romans shadow their movements. These Fabian tactics had been working well and Belisarius is eager to continue.<sup>245</sup> Unfortunately, the soldiery does not approve of this avoidance of battle.<sup>246</sup> A few lines later, Belisarius decides to try and explain to them his position in exhortation: his attempt fails. Procopius’ description

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<sup>239</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.13.12, 13.

<sup>240</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.13.17.

<sup>241</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.7. I have put forget in quotations because I am not so sure that Procopius did in fact forget.

<sup>242</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.33.

<sup>243</sup> An historical question that arises from Procopius’ focus on the efforts of Belisarius here to the exclusion of Hermogenes is the general’s relationships with his equals as opposed to his relationships with his subordinates. Belisarius, as described by Procopius, seems to have had a positive relationship with Hermogenes who was his equal if not his superior here. This is in stark contrast to his relationship with Peter his subordinate at Nisibis. I want to thank Michael Whitby (pers. comm.) for making me aware of this interesting situation which certainly merits further discussion, and I hope to pursue it in a further project on authority in the late Roman army.

<sup>244</sup> On Procopius’ discussion of the role of Belisarius in the defeat see my discussion below in appendix 2 pp. 347-348.

<sup>245</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.11.

<sup>246</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.12.

suggests that the soldiers and officers grew close to mutiny through the abuse they heaped on Belisarius; as a result, Belisarius changes his mind and decides to urge them on to battle.<sup>247</sup> Belisarius has lost his position of authority and to try and bring some semblance of order he assents to his unruly soldiers' demands. A few lines later Belisarius' Persian counterpart Azarethes also gives an exhortation, though he does so from a position of authority.<sup>248</sup> Once the speech is done, Procopius does not describe the reaction of the Persian soldiery, whether one of disdain or enthusiasm, but simply describes Azarethes' arraying of the battle-line. There is no need. Azarethes is in control and his rhetoric has effectively won his men over to his point of view.<sup>249</sup> Thus, regardless of the outcome of the battle, which was a significant victory for the Persians, the real problem here is that Belisarius lost his authority in the first narrative of battle in which he was in sole command. Plus, the two principal parts of the Roman army, its head (Belisarius the commander) and its body (the soldiers), each entered the battle with a certain degree of independence. This lack of unity was disastrous.

By and large those battles in which Belisarius figures are pitched battles. And, in many of them the Romans are successful. Procopius remarks on the importance of the Roman victory following Dara, and although there are some later successes, such as the Battles of Satala, Nisibis, and the Phasis River, the Romans' performance is somewhat mixed. There are a number of places where the Romans lose such as the battles of Oinochalakon and the Battle of Anglon. Nevertheless, when the Romans do win, if there is a unifying factor in their success it is good leadership in pitched battle. To defeat the Persians the Romans should try and stick to pitched battles, and when they do come to blows, the forces must be united. Not surprisingly, these issues come to a head in one

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<sup>247</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.24-25.

<sup>248</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.27-30.

<sup>249</sup> After the exhortations in the Battle of Dara the situation had been reversed for the Roman troops were never on the point of mutiny and, Belisarius and Hermogenes were in complete control.

speech, and battle, involving Belisarius. As noted above, Belisarius had some problems with Peter in the battle of Nisibis; and it was only his good sense and awareness of the battlefield situation that led to a Roman victory.<sup>250</sup> Belisarius refers to disorderly conduct early in his exhortation.<sup>251</sup> He also says that the men must act as one. The ability of the Persian commander Naved is amplified and Belisarius assures his men that an engagement with their foes at the walls of Nisibis will end in disaster.<sup>252</sup> But, he adds that if the Romans engage with the Persians in the open (in pitched battle), on grounds of their choosing, they will be successful.<sup>253</sup> In this, Belisarius' last battle in the *Persian wars*, he manages to defeat the Persians thanks to his leadership, and because he met them in the field, not in a siege.<sup>254</sup> Belisarius' role, and that of leadership in general, is crucial to Roman success in battle, or so Procopius.<sup>255</sup> In addition, it is in pitched battle, rather than in a siege, in which the Romans should expect to succeed. Thus, Belisarius is in many respects representative of the Roman army, and for that matter the Roman state in its actions in warfare in general.

At the end of book 1 Khusro makes his debut. The focus for much of the narrative had been Belisarius and, despite the mixed results, the Romans had fared well in the pitched battles in which they were involved. Although the Persians had eventually been successful at Amida after a protracted siege, the same was not true against an unprepared populace at Martyropolis. With Khusro now at the head of the Persian state and its armed forces the situation changes.<sup>256</sup> The military narrative at the start of book 2 is dominated by Khusro and so this marks the start of the second section of the Persian wars. Besides

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<sup>250</sup> See above pp 161-163.

<sup>251</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.18.6.

<sup>252</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.18.11-13.

<sup>253</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.18.14-15.

<sup>254</sup> Of course, this is despite the fact that Peter's insubordination nearly led to disaster.

<sup>255</sup> The leadership was exemplary at the last Battle of the Phasis River.

<sup>256</sup> See Whitby (1994) for the role of the shah in the Persian Empire's military operations. Cf. Börm (2007: 93-97).

the more specific focus on Khusro, the Persian army too garners far more attention from Procopius than its Roman complement. To demonstrate Khusro's dominance I want to focus on one particular description.

Khusro makes his first real appearance on the field of battle at the siege of Sura and the image Procopius develops is mixed.<sup>257</sup> From the beginning the action is very much focalized through him: "After again finishing such a great journey he reached the city of Sura which is on the Euphrates, and halted very close to it".<sup>258</sup> When the bishop comes before him to plead for the city the interaction of the two men becomes the focus of the narrative; even here, however, what we find is Procopius describing the actions of the bishop, but the actions and the thoughts of Khusro. Procopius also intervenes in the narrative to explain Khusro's actions, and he does so to prevent trouble from future encounters such as this.<sup>259</sup> As the context here is that of a siege we are reminded of Belisarius' and Hermogenes' words to Peroz in the first letter before the fighting at Dara.<sup>260</sup> The two had countenanced peace above all else, for the two had stated that the job of the commander is to bring about peace by any means possible. By trying to prevent unnecessary bloodshed and by using his wits to overcome future opponents Khusro is acting as a wise commander. Khusro has also managed to keep his emotions under control, again the mark of a good general.<sup>261</sup> For all of Khusro's emotional self-control, there is an important point to note here which will become particularly relevant when we turn to the narratives of the *Vandal Wars* and the *Gothic Wars*: Khusro can keep his emotions in check, is in complete control of his army, and for all intents and purposes is a good general; but, that does not make him a compassionate person. Khusro manages to control his anger when the bishop comes before him

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<sup>257</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.5.8ff.

<sup>258</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.5.8.

<sup>259</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.5.15.

<sup>260</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.1-3.

<sup>261</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.5.15.

but as soon as his stratagem is put into action, he unleashes his wrath on the unsuspecting populace.<sup>262</sup> After the reckless slaughter the Persian shah does decide to show kindness to the citizens of Sura, and Procopius intervenes to give us his three possible explanations as to why: humanity or kindness, love of money, or because of the love of a woman.<sup>263</sup> The fact that Procopius discusses the latter possibility in some detail suggests that this is the interpretation that he wants us to follow. As with most descriptions of a siege we find a woman playing a prominent role,<sup>264</sup> and as with Procopius' narrative of Amida, it is for a somewhat unusual reason: Khusro demonstrates some human tenderness.<sup>265</sup> Khusro is successful in most of the battles he engaged in. Yet, even though Procopius highlights Khusro's pre-eminence in the field, he does not let him off the hook; his comments following the sack of Antioch bear this out.<sup>266</sup> Khusro is a very capable commander and, as we saw, is in control of his emotions on the field of battle. When the battle ends and the rout begins – in the case of sieges the sack – his dark side emerges. Although Procopius does not approve, it makes Khusro a frightening foe to come up against in battle.

The third section of the text begins with the reappearance of Belisarius in the eastern theatre. This penultimate section of the *Persian Wars* is marked by Procopius' placing of the actions of Belisarius and Khusro in succession: Procopius will describe the actions of Belisarius, then immediately describe the actions of Khusro. Historically both actors were now heavily involved in the campaigns in the eastern theatre, but Procopius does more than simply describe the historical reality and shapes this part of the *Persian Wars* so that we the

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<sup>262</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.5.26.

<sup>263</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.5.28.

<sup>264</sup> Women feature in many of the actions in which Khusro is involved, which might be meant to play up the king's masculinity at the expense of Justinian and the Romans.

<sup>265</sup> When I say unusual I mean unusual in the sense that the woman is neither fighting to defend the city, nor wailing as it is sacked, though her purported actions do serve both usual functions.

<sup>266</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.9.8-13.

readers can compare the actions of one of the commanders with the other. What is more, the last episode aside, Belisarius and Khusro are rarely described in the same episode; the only exception comes near the end of the Persian wars at chapter 21,<sup>267</sup> which is the pivotal moment for this comparison, at least in regard to the *Persian Wars*.<sup>268</sup> Procopius did not need to change chapters to alter the focus from Belisarius to Khusro and vice versa while describing the events. Yet, that is just what he did. He takes a similar approach in book 1 when he discusses the plots formed against the rulers of the two empires: 1.23 is focused on the plot against Khusro, while 1.24 is focused on the plot against Justinian. Here Procopius also leaves grammatical markers that draw attention to his characterization and the contrast between of the two great individuals. At 2.15.35 Khusro is the subject of a rather long extended sentence. When the next chapter starts Belisarius is the subject of the first sentence and we find a  $\delta\tilde{\nu}$ .<sup>269</sup> This

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<sup>267</sup> It is here, after the siege of Sura/Sergiopolis, that the two great commanders finally meet, or at least, occupy the same place in the text; at the end of this chapter Belisarius exits the *Persian Wars* and Procopius describes the remaining chapters of book 2 much as he did the first chapters of book 1. Proem and the programmatic battle and programmatic siege aside, the main events for the development of the narrative take place in the rest of book 1. The same is largely true for book 2: Khusro stills play a major role (much as Belisarius did at the start of book 1 before Khusro enters the narrative) and we find the final battles which lead to peace (as far as Procopius' narrative is concerned) following the Battle of the Phasis River.

<sup>268</sup> At this moment in the text when Belisarius and Khusro engage in negotiations for peace we are reminded of Belisarius' words (along with Hermogenes') in the Battle of Dara. There he had said that the best general was the one that could bring about peace from war (1.14.2). Here, at least at the close of this episode, it does seem that Belisarius would merit that sort of praise for he seems to have brought peace from war. Indeed, at the beginning of the chapter Khusro sends a certain Abandanes to Belisarius' camp to find out what sort of general he is (2.21.1). Plus, Procopius claims that the Romans were louder in their praises for Belisarius with these actions than they were for the conquest of Africa (2.21.28). However, contained in the last few lines of this 21<sup>st</sup> chapter of book 2 of the *Persian Wars* is some implicit criticism of Belisarius. For, although Procopius says that Khusro was actually fleeing from the Romans here thanks to the efforts of the general, at 2.21.30, only one line later, Procopius says that Khusro disregarded the agreement and subsequently caused more trouble before the end of the chapter. Thus, in the context of the *Persian Wars* Belisarius for Procopius does not deserve the highest praise. And, ironically enough, though Procopius says that Belisarius may have outwitted Khusro (2.21.29), in effect it was the other way around. Here again Procopius' relatively simple language is also quite clever.

<sup>269</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.16.1. In this instance the  $\delta\tilde{\nu}$  is used in an adversative sense rather than in a copulative sense; I believe that Procopius is introducing the actions of Belisarius in contrast to those of Khusro, and it is not just marking the transition to a new idea without a sense of contrast implied (Smyth 1984: 644).

pattern continues through to the end of chapter 16. In the last sentence Belisarius is subject again and we find a  $\mu\epsilon\nu$  immediately following his name.<sup>270</sup> Chapter 17 opens with Khusro as subject and unsurprisingly a  $\delta\epsilon$  immediately following his name.<sup>271</sup> Procopius uses a similar practice on two occasions over the next few chapters.<sup>272</sup> Whenever we come across Belisarius in this part of the narrative he wants us to think about Khusro and vice versa; the same is surely true for the first two sections, the first which focused on Belisarius, and the second which focused on Khusro.

The descriptions of battle in the *Persian Wars* are largely explicable through Procopius' characterizations of its two principal figures: Belisarius and Khusro. But, the characters represent more than historical personages, for they also symbolize the respective forces as a whole. Belisarius the general is characterized in detail in the first section of the *Persian Wars*, Khusro the general in the second section. In the third, the two are juxtaposed, and the ultimate evaluation of their respective performances, particularly in relation to each other, is, in Herodotean manner, left up to the audience.

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<sup>270</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.16.19.

<sup>271</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.17.1. See Smyth 1984: 657.

<sup>272</sup> Just before the end of chapter 17 Khusro had been the subject (2.17.27-28); at the start of chapter 18 Belisarius is the subject and we find a  $\delta\epsilon$  next to his name and so, on the one hand, it could be used in the adversative sense here (2.18.1). On the other hand, there is a  $\mu\epsilon\nu$  in the last sentence in which Khusro is named at 2.17.27, and so Procopius likely constructed the parallel through  $\mu\epsilon\nu$  and  $\delta\epsilon$ ; although he is not named, Khusro is the subject of the following sentence at 2.17.28, the last of the chapter. Belisarius dominates the next two chapters and so there is nothing to say about them in this regard. At the end of chapter 19, however, the contrast is emphasized again. In the second last sentence of the chapter the second invasion of Khusro is the subject and we find a  $\mu\epsilon\nu$  (2.19.49). In the last sentence Belisarius, whose actions had dominated the last two chapters, is again the subject and we find a  $\delta\epsilon$  next to his name. Thus, although Khusro is not the subject of the preceding sentence it is not just any invasion, but Khusro's invasion, and he is explicitly named. At the start of chapter 20, with Belisarius now summoned to Constantinople, Khusro is the subject again, and we find a  $\delta\epsilon$ , here probably used in an adversative sense, though a copulative sense cannot be ruled out (2.20.1). Even at Belisarius' departure from the *Persians Wars*, at the end of chapter 21, Procopius still sees fit to juxtapose Belisarius with Khusro: "These things happened to the Romans in the third invasion of Khusro, and Belisarius was summoned by the emperor and came to Byzantium, so that he could be dispatched to Italy again, where already the affairs of the Roman were in a entirely bad state" (2.21.34).



## Part VI: Context

We now come to the last section of this chapter, and here I want to focus in more detail on the relationship between battles and the rest of the text, that is, the textual context, as well as the contemporary intellectual context, insofar as it pertains to warfare. Much as the first battle between the Persians and the Ephthalites serves as a programmatic battle for the rest of the narrative, there are other points discussed in Procopius' narrative that have a bearing on the descriptions which follow and which precede. In fact, what is immediately clear is that when approaching the battles in the *Wars*, context is paramount.<sup>273</sup> To understand his rhetoric of combat it is important to look not only at the battles on a case by case basis, but also in connection with one another, and the narrative at large. To illustrate this I am going to focus on one particular episode. Then I shall direct my attention to contemporary military thinking,<sup>274</sup> and look at one case that points towards Procopius' engagement with sixth century military theory.

After the battle which succeeded Amida Procopius says the following about generalship: "however they did nothing worthy of note, because no one was made commander-in-chief for the war, but with the generals of equal rank they stood against the views of each other and none wanted to come together".<sup>275</sup> This comment comes at the end of what had been a disastrous campaign for the Romans when, as he states, the Romans were something of a hydra. This narratorial intervention is significant, and it only becomes relevant when we come to the battles yet to come in the narrative. When one man (or as at Dara two – though as we saw above Belisarius dominates the narrative) has supreme command of the Roman forces, they are likely to win; on the other hand, when

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<sup>273</sup> Rood (1998: 9) stresses the importance of understanding how the text as a whole works for deciphering seemingly odd features of Thucydides.

<sup>274</sup> Kaldellis (2007b) has recently discussed select aspects of contemporary military policy, and Procopius' reaction to it. Though his points are interesting, his argument is ultimately unconvincing. Kaldellis, surprisingly, demonstrates a lack of engagement with recent scholarship on late Roman warfare.

<sup>275</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.8.20.

the Roman forces are not united, and are divided by envy, they will invariably fall to defeat at the hands of their foes.<sup>276</sup> These same themes are noted in Belisarius' exhortation before the Battle of Nisibis.

One of the episodes for which context is particularly important is the siege, and later sack, of Antioch; here we have to go beyond the immediate events surrounding the sack and look to the narrative at large. Much has been made of Procopius' tirade and seeming mystification after the Persians had sacked the city.<sup>277</sup> The turning of the standards, which is said to have foretold the disaster, has been given far too much prominence.<sup>278</sup> The key which Procopius provides for understanding the siege and sack comes in the middle of book 1. Peroz returns to Persia after his disastrous campaign to meet the wrath of Kavad. After dispensing with the *mihran* Kavad starts to consider how to avenge the Persian losses.<sup>279</sup> Before he can come to any sort of decision al-Mundhir (Alamoundaras), his Lakhmid ally, tells him in the form of a speech what he thinks Kavad should do.<sup>280</sup> In the course of the speech al-Mundhir tries to assuage Kavad's fears after the disasters in the year 527 and later.<sup>281</sup> He tells him that part of the problem was the fact that the Persians entered the fray on a

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<sup>276</sup> Two later readers of Procopius, namely Theophanes (Theoph. 174, 19-26) and Kedrenos (Cedr. 643, 3-9), refer to incidents where discord among the Roman forces had a deleterious effect. The episode comes almost verbatim from Malalas (18.4) and is also found in the *Paschal Chronicle* (Chron. Pasch. 618, 1-13). Some of the events are recorded by Procopius as well (1.12.1-24), who gives us a fuller, though not necessarily more reliable, account. Procopius does not mention the dismissal of Belisarius but merely notes that he was bettered in battle (1.12.23) before being appointed as commander of the troops at Dara (1.12.24). What is significant about Theophanes and Kedrenos is that they both give very positive accounts of Belisarius throughout unlike Malalas and the *Paschal Chronicle*. As a result, I am tempted to suggest that their inclusion of this detail in an otherwise positive appraisal of Belisarius is due to their reading of Procopius, who emphasizes strong leadership and united forces. Of course, the simpler possibility is that Procopius did not provide either chronicler with the detail they wanted about this episode and liked what they saw in Malalas and so decided to use that account. Cf. Whitby and Whitby (1989: 109, n. 337), and Greatrex (1998: 143) for this episode.

<sup>277</sup> Cameron 1985: 117; Kaldellis 2004: 127. Cf. Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 103-109.

<sup>278</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.10.1.

<sup>279</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.17.29.

<sup>280</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.17.30-39.

<sup>281</sup> See Greatrex (1998: 151-228) for the outcome of the Persian wars.

level footing with the Romans, and whenever someone does this they are liable to the vicissitudes of fortune: it is better to outwit an opponent and overcome them by hitting them when they are at a disadvantage. And, luckily for the Persians, such a situation exists in the case of the fabled city of Antioch:

They also say that the city Antioch is there, the first of all cities in regard to wealth and size and population in the Eastern Roman Empire; it is unguarded and void of soldiers. For the people of this city care for nothing other than their festivals and luxury and their seemingly endless zest for competition in the theatres against each other. Thus, if we go against them when they least suspect it, it is not unreasonable to suggest that we would take the city with a lightning strike all the while coming across none of the enemy forces, and then immediately make it back to the land of the Persians, before any of their soldiers in Mesopotamia learn what has happened.<sup>282</sup>

Kavad is convinced by al-Mundhir's plan largely because the Lakhmid king was experienced in war.<sup>283</sup> The Persian shah decides to carry out the operation just as al-Mundhir prescribed: suddenly and quite unexpectedly.<sup>284</sup> The initial result of this attack is the Battle of Callinicum; although the Persians had not originally planned on engaging the Romans they do, and defeat them in the process. Getting back to Antioch, however, we find a city which Procopius has marked out as unguarded and licentious. In the grand Greek historiographical tradition Antioch is ripe for a great reversal of fortunes and, through this little exchange between Kavad and al-Mundhir, Procopius has provided his first allusion to the later event. Thus, when we reach the siege and sack of the city later in book 2 we, the readers, are well prepared and better able to comprehend Procopius' tirade.

Besides providing some keys to the interpretation of particular events, such as the sack of Antioch, Procopius also puts the tactical and strategic doctrine that he espouses in the *Persian Wars* into contemporary thinking about

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<sup>282</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.17.36-38. Cf. Cataudella (2003: 406-415) for some interesting discussion of the significance of the use of the name "East Roman Empire" by Procopius.

<sup>283</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.17.40.

<sup>284</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.1ff.

war.<sup>285</sup> Buzes has just been made commander of the eastern frontier from the Euphrates to Persian territory.<sup>286</sup> At 2.6.3 Buzes gives a speech to the “first men of the Hierapolitans” after he learns of the events at Sura. Although it is rather long, I think that it is worth quoting in full:

On the one hand, whenever there is a struggle against attackers of equal strength, it is not unreasonable that they should come to blows in the open with the enemy; on the other hand, for those who in contrast happen to be much weaker than their opponents, it would be more expedient to circumvent their enemy through certain stratagems rather than to array themselves openly against them and enter into foreseen danger. You have heard how great the army of Khusro is. And if he himself wants to go out against us in a siege, and if we prevail against the enemy from the walls, it is likely that we will run out of provisions, while the Persians, on the other hand, will recover all they need from our land, and no one will stand against them. And if the siege is prolonged in this way I think that the fortifications will not be strong enough against the assaults of the enemy, for in many places they happen to be assailable, and certain irreparable harm would befall the Romans. But if with a portion of the army we guard the wall of the city, while the rest of us occupy the heights surrounding the city, sometimes we shall engage in guerrilla warfare with the camp of our foes, while at others times with those dispatched to secure provisions, and these attacks will force Khusro to break off the siege immediately, and to make his retreat in a short time, for he will not at all be able to bring in his assault against the fortifications without fear, nor will he be able to provide any of the provisions for so great an army.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> Towards the end of the *Persian Wars* at 2.30.15 Procopius goes into considerable detail about some measures taken by Mermeroz to strengthen Petra. This comes following Dagistheus' withdrawal after his failed siege attempt; when we consider that the siege of Petra in Lazica is the last siege described in the *Persian Wars*, and only two other conflicts remain in the narrative, namely the Roman stand in the pass near the River Phasis and the Battle of the River Phasis itself, it seems a bit out of place. When we remember that most of the sieges involved the Persians assaulting a Roman fortress or city, this little digression perhaps should be read as a synopsis of Procopius' precepts for withstanding a siege. Much like Buzes' speech, besides the mention of issues that surfaced in Procopius' description of sieges, many of the points raised in this discussion are also found in the military handbooks. The Persian defenders had been keen to avoid alerting the Romans of their low numbers (2.30.16). Maurice (Maurice *Strat.* 10.1) mentions similar concerns, though when discussing sieges he refers to the attackers and not the besieged; however, not alerting the enemy of one's numbers is a common enough concern in his treatise (see, Maurice *Strat.* 7.B.3, 7, for example). With the walls in a bad state, and a lack of suitable provisions not present, Mermeroz gets his men to fill up gaps in the wall with the linen bags used to carry provisions with sand (2.30.19). Maurice (Maurice *Strat.* 1.2.42) refers to the satchels that Roman soldiers brought along on campaign to carry some of their supplies and, although Procopius is here describing Persian practice, there is no reason to believe that it is not relevant for the Romans.

<sup>286</sup> The episode in question, which runs from 2.6.1 to 2.6.25, is also one of the few parts of the text where Justinian has an active role.

<sup>287</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.6.3.6.

Not surprisingly Buzes' words manage to persuade his listeners and the scene then shifts to Justinian. Almost immediately following his speech, however, Buzes leaves. What is more, when the narrative returns to Hierapolis at 2.6.21, none of the suggestions given by Buzes in regard to the defence of the city are implemented. In the end Khusro leaves the city because he is paid off by the citizens. These facts suggest that Buzes' speech has a more general purpose. It touches on many of the characteristics of a Procopian battle that I have described above and in fact reads like a passage from a military treatise such as Maurice's *Strategikon*.<sup>288</sup> Many of Buzes' comments reflect general Roman tactical concerns. One of those is the numerical deficiencies that we also saw in the Battles of Dara, Satala, Callinicum, and Anglon. When numbers do not favour the Roman side Buzes suggests the use of skirmishing or guerrilla-style warfare and the avoidance of pitched battle.<sup>289</sup> And, of course, there is the recourse to stratagems to overcome a foe.<sup>290</sup> Buzes also comments on the efficacy of the Persian army and the role of the shah Khusro in its success, both concerns prevalent in military treatises, and the *Strategikon* in particular.<sup>291</sup> The importance of provisions during a siege is also an issue prominent in the handbooks stressed here by Buzes.<sup>292</sup> These precepts marked out by Buzes show up in many of Procopius' descriptions of battle. As we saw above, their

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<sup>288</sup> This is despite the fact that Maurice wrote his handbook nearly 40 years after Procopius wrote his history, and recognizing that each work is, to a certain degree, a product of its own time. Nevertheless, warfare had not changed substantially from Procopius' time to Maurice's, and many of the changes were likely negligible. For an overview of contemporary (sixth-century) military theory see chapter two above pp. 120-124.

<sup>289</sup> Cf. Syrianus Magister *Peri strat.* 33; Maurice *Strat.* 8.2.56, 81; 12.B. 1; Syväne 2004: 114-115.

<sup>290</sup> See Rance (1993: 180-207) for a discussion of stratagems in sixth century *tactica* and in the context of sixth-century warfare in general, and above pp 168-169 for stratagems in some of Procopius' battle descriptions. Stratagems underscore much of Maurice's discussion. See especially book four in this regard.

<sup>291</sup> Maurice. *Strat.* 11.1: "They obey their leaders on account of fear; wherefore they withstand trouble with patience and resist their enemy on behalf of their homeland. They prefer to strive eagerly to succeed by planning and generalship ... They are impressive when laying siege, but even more impressive when besieged." Cf. Syväne 2004: 328-350; Börm 2007: 169-171.

<sup>292</sup> Syrianus Magister *Peri strat.* 9-10; Maurice. *Strat.* 10.3.

correspondences with contemporary military treatises suggest that Procopius' understanding of battle in the sixth century reflects to some degree the military doctrine espoused by the Roman military command.

### **Chapter Overview**

I began this chapter by looking at how Procopius prepares us, his audience, for the battles which are to come in the *Persian Wars* by highlighting some common elements of his descriptions in the programmatic narratives, the battle between the Ephthalites and Persians, and the siege of Amida. I also looked at how he arranged his text, and the way that this brought out the drama of his narrative. In this first part of the *Wars*, Procopius put much more emphasis on tactics than morale, though we also see that generalship, and his characterization of the leading commanders, played an important role in a battle's outcome. In the next chapter, where I turn to the *Vandal Wars*, I shall open again with questions of textual unity.

## **Chapter 4: the Vandal Wars**

Unlike some aspects of Roman North Africa in late antiquity, such as Saint Augustine,<sup>1</sup> and Egypt, the *Vandal Wars* and the reconquest are subjects that have attracted limited attention.<sup>2</sup> Again, Procopius is the principal source for most of what he describes,<sup>3</sup> and most narrative accounts merely follow his lead.<sup>4</sup> The war itself marks the beginning of Justinian's campaigns of reconquest; it also contributed significantly to the fame of Belisarius. In this chapter I begin by devoting considerable space to the artful way that Procopius orders his narrative, and through this, how he engages with his audience. This includes a look at, among other things, narrator interventions, exhortations, internal referencing (*prolepses*, etc.), and the unity of the text. As in other chapters, I shall give some attention to Procopius' characterization of the Roman general, not only by way of his actions in battle, but

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<sup>1</sup> North Africa's most famous son, St. Augustine, has, on the other hand, attracted considerable attention. It is the period after the Vandal conquest that has been least studied, with the period around the Arab conquest least of all, though that is largely attributable to the lack of sources, a problem that plagues much of Vandal through Arab Africa's study. The best overview of Roman North Africa from the Punic war onwards is that of Mattingly and Hitchener (1995), which is, nevertheless, a review of modern scholarship, particularly as it pertains to the material remains.

<sup>2</sup> For a long time the primary discussion of Byzantine North Africa (from 533 onwards) was that of Diehl (1896), which is still relevant. Pringle's (1981) two volume study of fortifications brought much of the military issues surrounding the Byzantine period up-to-date, though even it is now three decades old. Cameron's (2000: 559-569) overview touches on the main issues with the conquest and occupation. Modéran's (2003: 35-38, 313 – 414, 565 - 633) detailed study of the Berbers in late antiquity discusses some aspects of the Roman reconquest. Zarini (1997: 34-46) is also of interest in this regard. There also has been a fair amount of work on Corippus, on whom see the works of Cameron (1996a: 12-25; 1996b: 167-180), Zarini (1997, esp. 3, esp. 3-63), the introduction to Shea's translation (1998: 1-62), and Schindler 2007.

<sup>3</sup> As a comparison, the eastern focused Malalas (18.81) devotes a lone entry to the Vandal War, and even then only in relation to Belisarius' triumph. On the other hand, the ninth century chronicler Theophanes (*Chron.* 186-216), having found nothing of note in Malalas excised much of Procopius' narrative and included it in his chronicle, and to such an extent that it is one of the most detailed entries in the text. Why he decided to devote so much attention to Procopius and Africa is another matter, particularly since by his time Africa had long since fallen out of Roman hands while Italy, which receives short shrift, was still, at least to some degree, a part of the Byzantine world. Cf. Marc. Com. 534.

<sup>4</sup> Stein (1949: 311-328)'s account is little more than a summary of Procopius, though with good reason, I would argue. Cf. Bury 1923: 2.124-148.

also through the comments given by his colleagues and foes in direct discourse. Procopius also wants his readers to compare Belisarius with those Roman commanders identified in the *Vandal Wars*' introduction; thus we shall examine how well he meets the criteria alluded to in his discussion of those individuals. The careful attention that Procopius pays to the order of his narrative brings out not only the skill with which he writes, but also some of the ways that he manipulates the text to engage himself more fully with his audience, and in turn to engage his audience more fully with the text. His description of the nature of the fighting informs the reader of the unique character of the warfare in Africa, while statements of military doctrine underscore the connection with contemporary military theory and its didactic role. I shall also examine the military theory which underscores the descriptions of battle to be discussed, including issues such as tactics and order, morale, and stratagems. After this I identify some points of contact between the theory that Procopius expounds, and that found in military treatises. The tie that binds the seemingly disparate issues of the underlying military theory, Procopius' careful arrangement of the text, and his characterization of Belisarius, especially his generalship, is didacticism. By finishing with a look at Procopius' characterization of Belisarius I bring together the military and narrative issues already discussed, while also setting up my comments about didacticism in the *Vandal Wars*.

### **Part I: The Artful Historian and Reader Engagement**

I begin by looking at the many ways that Procopius artfully constructs his narrative, and in the process engages with his audience. The topics range from narrative order to narratorial interventions, and from that, his narratorial insight into the thoughts and feelings of the respective characters, a feature which contributes to



the drama of the events, and causes the reader to respond to the text itself.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, if there is one thing that stands out most about this part of the *Wars*, it is the number of features that actively engage the reader in the events described in the text. On the other hand, while encouraging the reader (both real and implied) to consider other possible outcomes to the events themselves, so participating in a pseudo-Herodotean dialogue, Procopius continues to guide his audience subtly towards the interpretation that his narrator holds.<sup>6</sup> After I have gone over a number of these features, I turn to the unity of the text, both the *Vandal Wars* as a stand alone text, and its place in the wider narrative.

### **Narrative Order**

In most respects Procopius manipulates the order the same way that he did in the *Persian Wars*; the important exception is his use of *prolepses*. A good illustration of his practice comes from the Battle of Ad Decimum.<sup>7</sup>

Just before the battle begins we learn that the Romans had arrived at Decimum.<sup>8</sup> In the first line of the narrative, however,<sup>9</sup> the order is changed and

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<sup>5</sup> See Morrison's (2006) study on the reading of Thucydides' *Histories*, for some suggestions about how the Athenian historian gets his audience to engage with the events he describes.

<sup>6</sup> Whereas Thucydides, on the one hand, generally provides his readers with a particular interpretation of the events he describes, Herodotus, on the other hand, engages in a dialogue with his audience, providing a number of possibilities which he often leaves to the reader to decide which is the most probable. On Thucydides see Rood (1998); on Herodotus Baragwanath (2008). Cf. Pelling 2000: 44, 83.

<sup>7</sup> This battle has attracted a lot of attention from scholars. Rubin (1957: 412-413) discusses the battle only briefly, and says that much of the description is rooted in Procopius' own worldview before ultimately crediting the victory to the Belisarius' initiative. Syväne (2004: 434-436) describes the course of the battle itself, paying attention to tactics and related issues. Brodka (2004: 78-82) focuses on the generalship of Belisarius and the role of an individual in determining the course of events, partly in relation to the effects of fortune, while Kaldellis (2004: 182-184) focuses on the role of fortune alone in determining the battle's outcome. If there is one thing that modern commentators have agreed on, it is the decisive character of the battle for the war. The battle itself is quite long, running from 3.18.1-3.19.33, though in comparison to battles in the *Persian Wars* and the *Gothic Wars*, little of this battle is actually devoted to the fighting involved between the two sides. I discuss this further below pp. 216-218. cf. Pringle 1981: 17-21.

Procopius tells us what the Vandals had been up to on that same day. Procopius' intervention, which follows shortly thereafter, includes a *prolepsis*, for he refers to some of Belisarius' actions – such as his preparations – which he has not yet described in the narrative.<sup>10</sup> Thus, before Procopius has described the battle-line we already know that John will go on ahead, and that the Massagetae will march on the left. When the first skirmish begins a few lines later we return to a linear chronological order.<sup>11</sup> Procopius then manipulates the order yet again, and at this point he includes an *analepsis*; he goes back to describe what Gibamunus had been doing during this little skirmish.<sup>12</sup> After this description there is an *ellipsis* and we now find that at least part of both armies are positioned close to each other.<sup>13</sup> But, the linear order soon disappears as Procopius includes another *analepsis* to describe part of the march to Decimum, even though before the battle began he had told us that they had arrived.<sup>14</sup> For the next few lines the order is chronological; in fact it is here that Procopius describes in greater detail the battle order that he had referred to at the beginning of the battle. There is further manipulation of the order at 3.19.18; we learn about some of the movements of the Vandal horsemen approaching Belisarius' advance party, but only after Procopius has described the debate among the allied commanders about how to respond to this threat. The linear order returns, before there is another *prolepsis* when Procopius refers to the Roman seizure of the treasure at Carthage following the victory in this latest major narrator intervention.<sup>15</sup> Following this intervention there is one last manipulation of

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<sup>8</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.17.17.

<sup>9</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.18.1.

<sup>10</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.18.3.

<sup>11</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.18.7.

<sup>12</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.18.12.

<sup>13</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.18.15.

<sup>14</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.19.1.

<sup>15</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.19.28.

the order, an *analepsis*, for Procopius goes back to describe what Belisarius did once the allied soldiers, who had been fleeing the approaching Vandal horsemen, reached him.<sup>16</sup> As dictated by the historiographical theorists and rhetoricians discussed above in chapter two, Procopius carefully manipulates his narrative. Perhaps the most significant aspect of this is his use of *prolepses*, the function of which I delve into below in my discussion of textual unity.

### **Focalization**

By and large, Procopius expresses 'point of view', or focalization, in the *Vandal Wars* in the same way that he did in the *Persians Wars*. In the text we find cases of, for example, single external focalization, single internal focalization, and multiple focalization, where there is a primary and a secondary focalizer, one or both of whom might be an internal and/or external focalizer. In what follows, I set out some examples from the Battle of Cape Bon.<sup>17</sup>

As noted in the *Persian Wars*, Procopius usually writes in the third person. In the battle of Cape Bon in 468 we begin with Procopius as the external narrator-focalizer (Procopius was not present at the battle): although Basiliscus is the subject of the first rather long sentence, Procopius includes an extended past contrary-to-fact conditional.<sup>18</sup> In that conditional Procopius blames the Roman failure on the cowardice (ἔθελοκακήσας) of Basiliscus. Procopius then tells us that if Basiliscus had demonstrated a little more bravery, the Romans would have easily defeated the Vandals. It is unlikely that Basiliscus could have conceived of the dire consequences

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<sup>16</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.19.30.

<sup>17</sup> On this battle see the summary of Syväne (2004: 507). Rubin (1957: 407), on the other hand, is uninterested in the battle. Like the battle between the Persians and Ephthalites discussed in the previous chapter, this too acts as a sort of programmatic-battle for some of the events at sea that come later in the text. See below pp. 212-216.

<sup>18</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.6.10.

of his lack of bravery. Instead, the story here is focalized through an omniscient narrator, Procopius, who knows how things turned out, but also has – relatively speaking – all of the information before him. Before this long sentence ends, however, the focalizer has become Gaizeric, who is an internal focalizer. Gaizeric himself is the subject of the second part of the sentence: his name is in the nominative (Γιζέριχος) and it is concerned with Gaizeric's astonishment (κατωρρώδησεν) at the size of Leo's fleet, and the capture of Sardinia and Tripoli.<sup>19</sup>

There are also some more complex examples of focalization in this battle. A little later at 3.6.15 we have an example of multiple focalization; in this sentence Procopius is the primary external narrator-focalizer, and Gaizeric is the secondary internal focalizer. We know this because the first clause of the sentence includes both the third-person imperfect singular of the verb πράσσω (ἔπρασσε) for the subject Gaizeric which marks out Procopius as the focalizer for he is describing what he, as the narrator, saw Gaizeric do; and it includes the verb οἰόμαι as a nominative masculine singular middle participle (οἰόμενος), which agrees with Gaizeric, and which marks out Gaizeric as the focalizer since what follows is what Gaizeric thought might happen. Towards the end of the battle, when the Roman ships are ablaze, the story is focalized through the endangered soldiers, who are collectively an internal focalizer (they were at the battle).<sup>20</sup> Though Procopius is the one describing the frantic behaviour of the soldiers running around trying to stem the spread of the fire, it is the soldiers of the Roman fleet who are panicked (θόρυβός τε, ὡς τὸ εἶκος, εἶχε τὸν Ῥωμαίων στόλον τε) at 3.6.20, not Procopius. As we have seen, even in as comparably short a battle such as this, Procopius shifts between many different

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<sup>19</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.6.11.

<sup>20</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.6.18ff.

focalizers; at points they might be simultaneous, and both internal and external to the story.

### **Narrator Interventions<sup>21</sup>**

An important feature in some of Procopius' descriptions of battle in the *Vandal Wars* is the narrator intervention, the importance of which is manifold. There are quite a few in the *Vandal Wars* – more so than in the *Persian Wars* – and I shall set some of them out here. Generally, there are both explicit examples in which Procopius intervenes in the first person, and more subtle interventions, where tools, such as diction, help mark those points where Procopius intervenes.

At the beginning of the Battle of Cape Bon, and after Procopius had noted the arrival of the fleet from Carthage, he blames the Roman failure on the cowardice (ἔθελοκακήσας) of Basiliscus. Procopius then tells us that if Basiliscus had demonstrated a little more bravery, the Romans would have easily taken the Vandals, and he does this using a past contrary-to-fact conditional. Through this intervention Procopius highlights the importance of this battle in the narrative that is to follow. This battle is the first described in the text; it is also the last great attempt of Rome to re-conquer Africa prior to the Justinianic reconquest. His comments underline the spectacular nature of the reconquest of Belisarius to follow: the Romans came so close to achieving this same goal in 468 and the only element missing was an able general. This particular intervention is used primarily to highlight the importance of what he is describing, or is about to describe, in this text, a pattern which will emerge throughout.

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<sup>21</sup> My discussion here builds on the perceptive comments of Gribble (1998), which are concerned with narrator interventions in Thucydides. Cf. Hornblower (1994b: 152-159), Rood (1998: 251, 256, 280), and Gribble (1999: 169-188) for further discussion of narrator intrusions in Thucydides; and Scott (1981: 63-64), Hinterberger (1998: 35-36), and Talbot and Sullivan (2005: 28-31) for narrator intrusions in Byzantine historiography.

At the beginning of the Battle of Ad Decimum we get one of the largest, and most explicit, narrator interventions in the *Vandal Wars*. This is one of the most significant interventions in the narrative for two reasons: it reminds the reader of what transpired at Cape Bon and so keeps him/her cognizant of what has transpired; it prepares the reader for what is to follow in the ensuing narrative, thus foreshadowing Rome's, and Belisarius', ultimate victory. Before the narrative begins Procopius interrupts his description of Gelimer's actions on the eve of battle to comment on the significance of what was to befall the Vandals.<sup>22</sup> He also uses a past contrary-to-fact conditional to let us know what he thinks would have happened:

For if Belisarius had not gone with this sort of deployment, and ordered the men with John to take the lead, with the Massegetae to go on the left side of the army, we would not have been strong enough to escape the Vandals.<sup>23</sup>

The fact that at the beginning of the *Vandal Wars* Procopius gave us a similar sort of conditional in the battle of Cape Bon, both in terms of its grammar and content, suggests that he is referring back to that very narrator intervention. Here in the Battle of Ad Decimum that missing element is present: the Romans again come within a whisper of defeat, and yet this time they have a brilliant general in Belisarius. This intervention, then, not only reminds us of what happened earlier, but it also points us towards the events that follow. The intervention itself may not be subtle, but the foreshadowing is: we know the capabilities of the enemy, everything is in place, and we should expect a Roman victory.<sup>24</sup> As both the intended and modern readers know, that is indeed what happened, and through this intervention Procopius has carefully manipulated their expectations.

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<sup>22</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.18.2ff.

<sup>23</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.18.3. Procopius actually uses another past contrary-to-fact conditional at 3.18.4.

<sup>24</sup> Interventions also play a role in Procopius' arrangement of the narrative.

There is another major intervention towards the end of the Battle of Ad Decimum at 3.19.25; surprisingly, even if Procopius had not used the first person, there are a host of other narrative signs that mark it out. In this intervention there is a hint of anticipation as he says, “having in his hands victory in the war”, because, at this point in the narrative, as Procopius will explain, the battle has not yet been determined. Procopius also says that he cannot explain what happened, and is sceptical about those who would point to the work of God. He then includes not one, but two extended past contrary-to-fact conditionals. In the first conditional Procopius feels bold enough to conjecture that, “I do not think that Belisarius would have withstood him”.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, at the end of that conditional Procopius includes some superlatives: “so great did both the number of Vandals and the fear of them among the Romans appear to be.”<sup>26</sup> This one major intervention, or perhaps series of interventions, is significant for some of the reasons outlined in the previous one at 3.18.2, but it also represents what might be called a moment of dramatic irony; here Gelimer had the Roman army in his hands, but threw it all away at the sight of his brother’s corpse. Although he did not know that he would not get another chance as good as this one to defeat the Romans, we, the readers, guided by our narrator’s insights into Gelimer’s thoughts, do: “[an opportunity] which he would no longer be able to take.”<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, at the end of this battle, in which Gelimer threw away certain victory, we see that the situation, as Procopius presents it, is a reversal from that of the Battle of Cape Bon where the general Basiliscus threw away a certain victory for the Romans.

There are a few other types of interventions including some further uses of superlatives (which we saw in the 3.19.25ff intervention), and casual reminder

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<sup>25</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.19.26.

<sup>26</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.19.27.

<sup>27</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.19.28.

interventions. In the Battle of Ad Decimum at 3.18.11 Procopius uses an actual result clause to describe the carnage that has taken place in the battle thus far:

And the massacre of the Vandals in the 70 stades became so great that the ones who beheld it would have guessed that it was the work of 20,000 enemy troops.

Procopius plays up the scale of the devastation again to emphasize the importance of this battle.<sup>28</sup> There are some other occasions where Procopius uses superlatives when describing battles. Sometimes the interventions are little more than reminders, and might best be called casual interventions. So, in the Battle of Tricamarum in 533 Procopius is anxious to remind us that the Huns had been scheming against the Romans, and had decided to hold back from combat to wait for a victor to emerge before fighting themselves.<sup>29</sup> There is another casual intervention at the start of the Battle of Mammes in 534. Procopius says, “here the four leaders of the Berbers whom I mentioned a little earlier,” [and so we, the readers, should remember].<sup>30</sup> Only two sections later Procopius intervenes (casually) again to remind us that he had already described the circle of camels.<sup>31</sup>

As this survey has shown, Procopius uses a host of both explicit and implicit interventions in the *Vandal Wars*, a significant feature of which is his use of the first person, something which in part foreshadows the practice of later Byzantine historians. What is more, they play a role in highlighting the importance of the events, and in assisting the readers’ interpretation of them.

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<sup>28</sup> It is always important to keep in mind that Procopius is trying to demonstrate that the wars which he is describing are the most important in human history, and so each battle contained therein should be seen in this light. Cf. Procop. *Wars* 1.1.6: “It will be clear that there is nothing that is greater or mightier than what transpired in these wars if you want to prove beyond any reasonable doubt with the truth.”

<sup>29</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.7.

<sup>30</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.11.15. The naming of personages, both Roman and otherwise, is an important issue which I discuss further below pp. 204-207. Trying to identify Berber titlature using Procopius is difficult because of his ambiguity. Cf. Modéran 2003: 435ff.

<sup>31</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.11.17.



## Procopius' Use of Numbers

As noted in chapter three Procopius' reporting of numbers is an important issue in the descriptions of battle. Here I look at Procopius' practice in the *Vandal Wars*, highlighting some of the similarities with the *Persian Wars*, while noting instances where he looks ahead to the *Gothic Wars*. In the Battle of Cape Bon the only figure provided by Procopius is the 280 stade distance of the town where the Roman fleet was anchored from Carthage.<sup>32</sup> There is a skirmish at the beginning of the battle of Ad Decimum, and, in the melee, Procopius tells us that John killed 12 of Ammatas' men.<sup>33</sup> After Ammatas' defeat we learn the following about the Vandals: "For they were travelling in no order and were not arranged for battle, but in squadrons, and these were small; for they marched in [squadrons of] 20 or 30."<sup>34</sup> At 3.18.12 we learn that 2,000 came with Gibamundus to Pedion Halon, which is 40 stades from Decimum. Only a couple of lines later Procopius tells us that "there was a certain man among the Massagetae...who led a few men."<sup>35</sup> Following the skirmish between the Massagetae and the Vandals Procopius simply tells us that "they were all disgracefully destroyed."<sup>36</sup> Belisarius stationed his forces in an encampment 35 stades from Decimum.<sup>37</sup> As regards the number of forces present, we only learn that Belisarius gave his exhortation to "the whole army".<sup>38</sup> The figures given by Procopius continue to be vague following the exhortation; we get "all the horsemen",<sup>39</sup> "the whole army",<sup>40</sup> "rest of the army",<sup>41</sup> "a great deal of Vandal

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<sup>32</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.6.10.

<sup>33</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.18.6.

<sup>34</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.18.8.

<sup>35</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.18.13.

<sup>36</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.18.19.

<sup>37</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.19.1.

<sup>38</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.19.1.

<sup>39</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.19.11.

<sup>40</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.19.12.

<sup>41</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.19.13.

horsemen”,<sup>42</sup> “Uliaris the bodyguard of Belisarius happened to be there with 800 guards”,<sup>43</sup> and then at the end of the battle, and in regard to casualties, “having lost many there”.<sup>44</sup>

The first reference to the size of the army in the Battle of Tricamarum comes before one of Belisarius’ exhortations, and as with the Battle of Ad Decimum, all we learn is that he summoned “the whole army”.<sup>45</sup> After that exhortation we get our first figure, though not without another vague reference: “After such words of exhortation Belisarius sent all the horsemen, except [πλήν] for 500”.<sup>46</sup> The next day Belisarius followed “with the infantry and the 500 horsemen.”<sup>47</sup> We also learn from Procopius that Tricamarum, where the Romans encountered the Vandals, was “150 stades distant from Carthage”.<sup>48</sup> Following an exhortation of Tzazon Procopius says, “Martinus and Valerian and John and Cyprian and Althias and Marcellus held the left flank and as many others [ὄσοι ἄλλοι] who were leading the Foederati”.<sup>49</sup> In regard to the opposite side of the Roman line we learn, “and the right by Pappas and Barbatus and Aigan and as many [ὄσοι] led the cavalry units.”<sup>50</sup> The next definite number that we get is again the 500 horsemen with Belisarius.<sup>51</sup> There follows a bunch of vague descriptors: “with the rest of the army”,<sup>52</sup> “John selected a few of those under him”,<sup>53</sup> “John again led out more [πλείους] of Belisarius’ guardsmen”,<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.19.15.

<sup>43</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.19.23.

<sup>44</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.19.31.

<sup>45</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.1.12.

<sup>46</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.2.1.

<sup>47</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.2.2.

<sup>48</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.2.4.

<sup>49</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.4.

<sup>50</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.4.

<sup>51</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.6.

<sup>52</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.7.

<sup>53</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.10.

<sup>54</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.12.

“with almost all [πᾶσι σχεδὸν] of Belisarius’ guards and spearmen”,<sup>55</sup> and “then the whole Roman army”.<sup>56</sup> We learn that, “less than [ἥσους 2] 50 of the Romans died in this battle, but of the Vandals about [μάλιστα] 800.”<sup>57</sup> In the melee that follows, and after the brief interlude when he supplies us with seemingly definite figures for the casualties, Procopius again uses vague descriptions, before finishing with something more definite; so we get “some few domestics”,<sup>58</sup> “but when those that perceived”,<sup>59</sup> “killing all men upon whom they happened”,<sup>60</sup> “95 years”,<sup>61</sup> and “around [μάλιστα] the middle of the last month”.<sup>62</sup> The emerging pattern is that Procopius shies away from referring to the size of both Roman and Vandal forces involved in particular engagements, which is very much in keeping with the narrative at large. Too much attention on the precise figures would detract from his efforts to craft a dramatic, surprising, and brilliant victory in this conquest.

There are a range of different figures used in the Battle of Mammes, and here he looks ahead to the *Gothic Wars*. Solomon decides to lead his “whole army” against the Berbers after he reads a letter.<sup>63</sup> The Roman commander also attempts to boost the morale of his troops through an exhortation in which he says that “around 50,000 [κατὰ μυριάδας πέντε] Berbers have gathered and already defeated 500 Romans”.<sup>64</sup> When Solomon dismounts from his horse to fight on foot, he urges the rest of the soldiers to do the same and then charges a portion of the enemy circle

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<sup>55</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.12.

<sup>56</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.15.

<sup>57</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.18.

<sup>58</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.21.

<sup>59</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.22.

<sup>60</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.24.

<sup>61</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.28.

<sup>62</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.28.

<sup>63</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.11.14.

<sup>64</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.11.23.

with “no less than [οὐχ ἧσσον ἢ] 500”.<sup>65</sup> At the battle’s conclusion Procopius says, “it is said that 10,000 [μύριοι] Berbers died in this struggle”.<sup>66</sup> Solomon marches off with his whole army against the Berbers at the start of the Battle of Mt. Bourgaon.<sup>67</sup> After Solomon’s exhortation he orders Theodorus to lead 1,000 foot soldiers.<sup>68</sup> When the battle has ended, Procopius reports that, “50,000 [μυριάδες πέντε] Berbers died in this encounter”,<sup>69</sup> “but not one of the Romans”.<sup>70</sup> There are some more figures in the Battle of Mt. Aurasium. Belisarius “chose 100 of his spearmen and guards”.<sup>71</sup> A little later we learn that “Belisarius gathered about [ἄμφι] 2,000 of his army”.<sup>72</sup> This force overtook the rebellious troops at Membressa, 350 stades from Carthage.<sup>73</sup> At the end of this battle we learn that Belisarius did not pursue them, “the army being much too small”.<sup>74</sup> Germanus encamps within (ἄπο) 35 stades of the city of Carthage at the beginning of the Battle of Scalae Veteres.<sup>75</sup> With Stotzas’ withdrawal to Numidia, Germanus gives chase and arrives with his whole army.<sup>76</sup> He then lines up his army and places all the infantry along the wagons,<sup>77</sup> places the best of the horsemen on the left of the infantry, and all the rest on the right flank.<sup>78</sup> Procopius then describes, albeit in minimal detail, the arrangement of the opposing forces including many 1,000’s (μυριάδες πολλοί) of Berbers.<sup>79</sup> Towards the end of

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<sup>65</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.11.51.

<sup>66</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.11.55.

<sup>67</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.12.2.

<sup>68</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.12.17.

<sup>69</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.12.25.

<sup>70</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.12.25.

<sup>71</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.15.9.

<sup>72</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.15.11.

<sup>73</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.15.12.

<sup>74</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.15.46.

<sup>75</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.16.10.

<sup>76</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.17.2.

<sup>77</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.17.4.

<sup>78</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.17.5.

<sup>79</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.17.8.

the battle we learn that Stotzas managed to escape with a few men.<sup>80</sup> Germanus attacks the mutineers' camp and sends some of his followers to attack one side.<sup>81</sup> When the rebellious troops still in camp learn that their defence has been breached they flee, and Germanus rushes in with all the rest of the army.<sup>82</sup> When the soldiers get drunk with lust for booty, Germanus, and a few men, heave reproaches on them.<sup>83</sup> Many of the Berbers pursue the mutineers.<sup>84</sup> Stotzas, at the very end, briefly considers taking up the fight anew before thinking better of it and fleeing with 100 men.<sup>85</sup> Finally, Stotzas retires with some few Vandals to Mauritania.<sup>86</sup>

Though not a complete list, the previous catalogue does give us a good indication of the sorts of figures that Procopius uses in the *Vandal Wars*. Overall, he is less likely to use definite figures in the *Vandal Wars* in comparison to the *Persian Wars*. In the Battle of Dara, for example, Procopius gives us a wide variety of different figures. Procopius tells us how many troops the Romans and Persians had at Dara,<sup>87</sup> the number of reinforcements brought by the Persians,<sup>88</sup> and on two separate occasions, the number of troops under specific Roman or allied commanders.<sup>89</sup> He also gives us some definite casualty figures.<sup>90</sup> In what is arguably the centre-piece battle of the *Vandal Wars*, the Battle of Ad Decimum, Procopius is a little less clear about the numbers involved. We might well assume that the total size of the Roman force participating in the battle equalled the total

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<sup>80</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.17.24.

<sup>81</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.17.26.

<sup>82</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.17.28.

<sup>83</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.17.30.

<sup>84</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.17.31.

<sup>85</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.17.33.

<sup>86</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.17.35.

<sup>87</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.13.23.

<sup>88</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.1.

<sup>89</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.3.19, 1.3.20.

<sup>90</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.14.41, 1.14.51.

given at the beginning of the narrative,<sup>91</sup> and certainly phrases like “the whole army” and “all the horsemen/cavalry” do suggest as much; but, we also find similar language in the Battle of Scalae Veteres in regard to Germanus’ army. Plus, this latter battle took place four years after the original invasion and we have no way of knowing what happened to the many soldiers and units involved after Belisarius’ initial conquest, at least based on Procopius’ narrative. Thus, it is hard to reconstruct the numbers involved in the many battles from Procopius’ figures.<sup>92</sup> The *Vandal Wars* is rife with qualifiers such as “about”. Procopius’ sparse usage of definite figures might lead us to believe that those figures point towards the accuracy of those he does use: if he did not know the figures involved, he would not use them.<sup>93</sup> This is part of Procopius’ attempts to wield his authority, by subtly arguing that his account is to be trusted.<sup>94</sup> Procopius on occasion juxtaposes figures that he claims are accurate, with figures that are nearly accurate. In the Battle of Mt. Aurasium, for example, we get “100 of his spearmen and guards”,<sup>95</sup> “about [ἀμφὶ] 2,000 of his army”,<sup>96</sup> and “350 stades distant from Carthage”.<sup>97</sup> When the reader comes across the middle figure he/she is likely to assume that it is a definite figure, regardless of the qualifier “about”, because of its proximity to two other figures where no such qualifier is given. Conversely, the inclusion of one qualifier such as “about”, in a set of figures in close succession, persuades the reader that the two definite figures are accurate, for if they were not, the reader would expect that Procopius

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<sup>91</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.11.1ff.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. the comments of Treadgold (1995: 60, 2007: 219-220).

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Hornblower (1994b: 150-152) on Thucydides and numbers.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Marincola 1997; Dewald 2007.

<sup>95</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.15.9.

<sup>96</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.15.11.

<sup>97</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.15.12.

would have included a qualifier as he did with the 2,000.<sup>98</sup> Even when the qualifiers are used with numbers that stand alone, they are likely to have the same effect. So, when Procopius says things like, “no less than [οὐχ ἥσσον ἤ] 500”,<sup>99</sup> “it is said that 10,000 Berbers died in this struggle”,<sup>100</sup> “less than [ἥσσους ἤ] 50 of the Romans died in this battle, but of the Vandals about [μάλιστα] 800”,<sup>101</sup> and “within [ἄπο] 35 stades of the city of Carthage”,<sup>102</sup> we, the readers, are likely to give his numbers more credence because of his inclusion of the qualifier, even though here they are not juxtaposed with definite figures.

Finally, on occasion Procopius will highlight a specific number, though it may not always be clear why. In the Battle of Tricamarum, for example, Procopius is constantly referring to a group of 500 horsemen marked out by Belisarius: “after such words of exhortation Belisarius sent all the horsemen, except [πλήν] for 500”,<sup>103</sup> “he [Belisarius] followed with the infantry and the 500 horsemen”,<sup>104</sup> and “Belisarius arrived at the opportune moment with the 500 horsemen”.<sup>105</sup> Here, despite the timely arrival of Belisarius’ troops, they did not serve a terribly important function in the fighting that followed. Instead, it is the few men selected by John that really initiated, and succeeded in, the actual fighting.<sup>106</sup> In sum, Procopius’ numbers in the *Vandal Wars* serve a number of purposes. The references to the myriads of Berbers, for example, highlight their barbarity, while also looking ahead to his use of

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<sup>98</sup> Cf. Procop. *Wars* 4.11.23: “around [κατὰ] 50,000 Berbers have gathered and already defeated 500 Romans”.

<sup>99</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.11.51.

<sup>100</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.11.55.

<sup>101</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.18.

<sup>102</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.16.10.

<sup>103</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.2.1.

<sup>104</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.2.2.

<sup>105</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.6.

<sup>106</sup> Another example of a repeated group is the 800 guards of Uliaris who are referred to a few times in the Battle of Ad Decimum.

similar figures in the *Gothic Wars*. On the other hand, Procopius is much less precise than he is in the *Persian Wars*, a feature which helps him to highlight the events that he describes, while not drawing the readers' attention away from what were likely two forces, Romans and Vandals, that were quite similar in size. If the numbers were not significant, this would have challenged Procopius' supposition that his wars were the greatest ever, so leaving him open to the sorts of charges that Thucydides lays against Homer, owing, in no small part, to the numbers that Homer uses in his works.<sup>107</sup> Finally, his extended use of qualifiers and selective use of precise figures, which are often juxtaposed, emphasizes the authority, and so, trustworthiness, of Procopius the historian and narrator.

#### **Narrative Markers: Names**

Like the use of numbers, the use of names, or rather, whom Procopius names and whom he does not is an important issue. To examine this aspect in depth I am going to focus on one battle, the Battle of Tricamarum.<sup>108</sup> The first person named in the narrative is Gelimer: his name is also the first word of book 4. Its placement marks him out as a significant personage: Gelimer is to play an important role in this battle. He is the commander-in-chief of the combined African and Sardinian Vandal forces. Of the two Vandal exhortations given in the course of the narrative, the one by Gelimer himself and the other by his brother Tzazon, it is the exhortation of Gelimer that is both longer, and more noteworthy. Furthermore, Gelimer is not only the last Vandal named, but also the last Vandal of importance for the battle itself: when he turns tail and flees the scene, his disgruntled kinsmen

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<sup>107</sup> Thuc. 1.3, 1.9ff.

<sup>108</sup> This battle has attracted less attention than Decimum. See Rubin (1957: 417), Kaldellis (2004: 185-187), and Syväne (2004: 436-437).



follow suit.<sup>109</sup> The rest of the battle is filled with some disciplinary problems which Belisarius encounters; by that point the fighting has ended and the Vandals no longer play a part.

Even those characters who make brief appearances in the narrative are important. There is one such character named in the course of the battle. A certain Laurus, a Carthaginian, is named early in the narrative. According to Procopius, he was charged with treason and impaled by Belisarius. This reference to Laurus is interesting for Procopius is usually unconcerned with the relative unknowns in his descriptions of battle, particularly those not directly involved in combat, unless they have performed some daring deed. As the fighting has not yet begun, that is clearly not the case here; however, this episode does fall in the midst of Procopius' discussion of the problems with the disingenuous Huns. Since Belisarius attempts to win over the Massagetae with gifts, the inclusion of the detail about Laurus is part of Procopius' attempt to present Belisarius as favourably as possible. Belisarius is prepared to do whatever it takes to achieve his desired ends; he is also cognizant of the situation. Though Belisarius is quite happy to try and pacify some unruly allies through gifts, he is also prepared to use violence, or the threat of violence, if necessary.<sup>110</sup>

What about patronymics? Although the patronymics are not specifically given for any character in the battle, Procopius does highlight Tzazon's relation to Gelimer, the most important Vandal in the *Vandal Wars*: he is one of Gelimer's brothers. Tzazon is named a few times throughout the *Vandal Wars* and more often than not Procopius calls him the brother of Gelimer.<sup>111</sup> He is first mentioned immediately

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<sup>109</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.20-23.

<sup>110</sup> On the importance of discipline in the *Vandal Wars* see below pp. 218-222.

<sup>111</sup> At 3.11.23 when Tzazon is first introduced he is marked out as Gelimer's brother. When we meet him again at 3.24.1 we are again told that he is the brother of Gelimer. At 3.25.10

following Gelimer's exhortation to the African Vandals: "After Gelimer spoke such words he ordered his brother Tzazon to give a separate exhortation to those who came with him from Sardinia."<sup>112</sup> At 4.3.1 Tzazon's name is given without the familial relation, although when Procopius is describing the Vandal deployment he again notes that he is Gelimer's brother.<sup>113</sup> When the battle gets underway, the next two places where we find Tzazon his relation to Gelimer is not given;<sup>114</sup> but at the last, and most significant point, it is: "but many of the best of the Vandals fell, even Tzazon himself the brother of Gelimer."<sup>115</sup> The death of Tzazon is arguably the turning point of the battle; not long after his death Gelimer decides to flee.<sup>116</sup> Admittedly, Procopius says that Gelimer left straightaway after he found out that Belisarius was approaching with the infantry and the rest of the army; however, rather significantly, Procopius also says that after Gelimer found out about Belisarius' approach he left without saying a word. Earlier in the Battle of Ad Decimum the turning point came when Gelimer came down from the hill and saw his brother Ammatas' corpse.<sup>117</sup> Tzazon's introduction is after the death of Ammatas; the constant affirmation of Tzazon's relation to Gelimer is certainly to remind us that the turning point was Ammatas, Gelimer's other brother's, death. Thus, though Procopius might say that Gelimer fled the scene at Tricamarum as a result of tactical considerations, we are to understand that Tzazon's death was no less important a reason for his flight.<sup>118</sup>

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Tzazon is again identified as Gelimer's brother. The lone exception, prior to the Battle of Tricamarum, is at 3.25.24 and here Tzazon is in the company of Gelimer and the two embrace: there is no need for Procopius to mark out the familial relation here.

<sup>112</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.2.23.

<sup>113</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.8.

<sup>114</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.10, 4.3.12.

<sup>115</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.14..

<sup>116</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.20.

<sup>117</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.19.29.

<sup>118</sup> The case could also be made that by constantly stating Tzazon's relation to Gelimer prior to the Battle of Tricamarum itself Procopius is anticipating the ultimate outcome of that battle.

When we take a closer look at the secondary commanders (those who are not the commander-in-chief) whom Procopius names we see that yet again he marks out those – in this case the one – personages who play an important role in the narrative. Procopius names John the Armenian at 4.2.1. During the same battle, but a little further on, when describing the Roman deployment Procopius gives the following names:

Martinus, Valerian, John, Cyprian, Althias, and Marcellus held the left wing and there were as many other commanders of the Foederati, Pappus, Barbatus, and Aigan held the right wing and as many others led the cavalry squadrons.<sup>119</sup>

Though several names are listed, none are given their patronymics, or ethnicity; moreover, there are several commanders who are not named. Of course, none of the regular soldiers (i.e., non-officers) are listed either, but neither Procopius' audience nor Procopius himself were interested in those soldiers. After naming some of the commanders of the two wings Procopius then tells us that John was arranged in the centre.<sup>120</sup> So, while undoubtedly there are places where Procopius decides to include the ethnicity of a commander as a mark of clarity, he has not done so here. In this particular situation where two Johns are named in close succession we would expect Procopius to clarify the matter with the inclusion of "the Armenian" had clarity been his chief concern; however, he does not. What is more, Procopius does not include "the Armenian" after the respective character's name, the John in the centre, at all in the rest of the narrative.<sup>121</sup> John the Armenian, on Belisarius' advice, makes three sallies against the middle of the Vandal line. It is in the third charge that one of the principal moments of the battle took place: the death of

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<sup>119</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.4.

<sup>120</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.5.

<sup>121</sup> We know that the John in the centre (4.3.5) is John the Armenian because Procopius tells us that the John taking the centre also had the general's standard, which John the Armenian was entrusted with at 4.2.1.

Tzazon. During the fierce battle that ensued when the two forces crashed against each other Tzazon dies; John the Armenian played an instrumental role as the commander of the Roman charge. Again, here with John's entry into Procopius' narrative of the Battle of Tricamarum at 4.2.1, and with the addition of the ethnic title "the Armenian", Procopius has singled out a character that is to play an important role in the narrative which follows. Classical and classicizing historians are known for their selectivity regarding who is to be named in a text. Procopius sticks to this trend, with one notable exception. When he does include additional information it serves an important function in the narrative. What is more, where a person is named in the narrative is also significant.

### **Exhortations**

As we saw in chapter three, the pre-battle speeches have quite an important role in the structure of the narrative: they help both characters and readers understand what has just transpired, and they alert them to what might unfold.<sup>122</sup> Kaldellis, following from the work of de Romilly, looked at the connection between speech and action in the Battle of Mammes,<sup>123</sup> and persuasively argued for a strong relationship between speech and text in that battle. How does this mesh with the cases from the rest of the *Vandal Wars*? Exhortations are more frequent in the *Vandal Wars* than in the *Persian Wars*; but, many have a character distinct from those found in the *Persian Wars*. As noted by Kaldellis with regard to Mammes, we still find exhortations that lay out what it is that Procopius thinks the respective general, or generals, need to do in order to be successful in battle. The key

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<sup>122</sup> On speeches in general in ancient historiography see Fornara (1983: 142-168), Rohrbacher 2002: 159-162, Pelling (2006 – specifically concerned with Herodotus), and Marincola 2007b.

<sup>123</sup> De Romilly 1956: 144-150; Kaldellis 2004: 29-33.

difference, however, is the inclusion of a greater number of ideological issues in the exhortations from the *Vandal Wars* than in the exhortations found in the *Persian Wars*. In this section I shall focus on the exhortations of the Battle of Tricamarum, though I shall have occasion to refer to select other speeches.

To begin, a disclaimer: the set of exhortations in the *Persian Wars* was not devoid of ideological matters: in the Battle of Callinicum Belisarius tells his men that God will help those who find themselves in danger when it is not of their own making.<sup>124</sup> Yet, whereas the previous exhortations were heavy on military matters, here, Procopius has more recourse to other concerns. So, there are a number of exhortations where we find some variation on the claim: “we are here to recover what is ours”, with the ‘ours’ referring to the land in dispute.<sup>125</sup> In the same vein there are also appeals to patriotism, such as there is in the Battle of Ad Decimum.<sup>126</sup> These arguments advocated by Belisarius also work both ways, however; Vandal and Berber commanders alike make similar claims. In the Battle of Ad Decimum we get links to justice and God in Belisarius’ exhortation at 3.19.6ff. Those are some of the issues raised in Procopius’ battle exhortations. Now, let us take a closer look at the exhortations in the Battle of Tricamarum.

The first thing that Belisarius says in his exhortation is that the men do not need an exhortation because they have already defeated their foes decisively, clearly an attempt to boost their morale.<sup>127</sup> Next, Belisarius tells the men that the end of the campaign is in sight.<sup>128</sup> The importance of numbers, a theme referred to a few times in the *Persian Wars*, is brought up again here, though on this occasion

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<sup>124</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.17ff.

<sup>125</sup> On Procopius, Justinian, and the justification for the war see Beck (1986: 41-43), Pazdernik (2005), and Brodka (2004: 73-75).

<sup>126</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.19.8.

<sup>127</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.1.13.

<sup>128</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.1.15.

Belisarius claims that valour is more important than numbers.<sup>129</sup> Belisarius again appeals to the past achievements of the Roman troops, and says that because of this success, their enemies are afraid of them.<sup>130</sup> Belisarius urges them that if they lose this battle, they will lose their own land.<sup>131</sup> Morale, the dominant theme thus far in the exhortation, is alluded to again: Belisarius reminds his men that they won the last battle without the infantry whereas on this occasion they are entering battle with the whole army and God propitious.<sup>132</sup> Next, Belisarius tells his men to seize the moment, and includes a little digression about the motives of Fortune.<sup>133</sup> Finally, Belisarius tells his men that the Vandals will not fight any better than usual knowing, and perceiving, that their family is threatened, and he says instead that this is quite draining for them.<sup>134</sup> In this particular exhortation, there are few points that pertain directly to operations and tactics on the battlefield. The same is true of Gelimer's exhortation. Before we go through the exhortation however, I must first point out that Belisarius' speech and Gelimer's speech are connected, for the end of Belisarius' speech at 4.1.25 is the beginning of Gelimer's speech at 4.2.8 – this is an example of *anadiplosis*.<sup>135</sup> Moving on to the speech itself, as noted, Gelimer tells his men that if they do not win they will be handing over their women, children, and land to the Romans, and that they will be enslaved.<sup>136</sup> Next, he tells them that their hopes rest squarely on their shoulders. He also emphasizes that they should fear defeat, and not the number of dead bodies: they should let fear guide them to success.<sup>137</sup> The

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<sup>129</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.1.16. As we saw above, Procopius does not give us the total number of troops involved in the battle, and so we do not know what the difference in size was between the two opponents.

<sup>130</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.1.16-17.

<sup>131</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.1.19.

<sup>132</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.1.21.

<sup>133</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.1.23.

<sup>134</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.1.24-25.

<sup>135</sup> That is, rhetorical *anadiplosis*.

<sup>136</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.2.11. On the theme of freedom and slavery see Pazdernik (1997, 2000).

<sup>137</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.2.12.

African Vandals were not to concern themselves with what happened earlier, for Fortune was the cause of the Roman victory.<sup>138</sup> The Vandals have more valour than the Romans.<sup>139</sup> Gelimer also points out that they have a numerical advantage over their Roman foes.<sup>140</sup> Further, Gelimer says that the empire has been handed down to them by their ancestors and so they must uphold this.<sup>141</sup> Gelimer tells his men to forget about the wailing of their women and children even though he himself can no longer continue because of it, or so he says.<sup>142</sup> On two separate occasions in this speech Gelimer refers to the wailing of women and children, a feature with tragic, and rhetorical, overtones. The suffering of women and children is a means of playing up the pathos of the scene according to the rhetoricians, as we saw above in chapter two. By employing these elements in his speech Gelimer is highlighting the tragic character of their own situation to his men in the hopes of spurring them on. As regards the real and implied audience, it increases the drama of the scene by framing the Vandals' predicament using a system of meaning the audience would understand (rhetoric and tragedy).<sup>143</sup>

In closing, Gelimer tells his men that they will never get back their possessions if they do not win now,<sup>144</sup> so they must show their mettle.<sup>145</sup> Having highlighted the points stressed by the two generals, it is clear that the exhortations from this battle are not terribly concerned with what the generals must do tactically to

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<sup>138</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.2.15.

<sup>139</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.2.17.

<sup>140</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.2.18.

<sup>141</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.2.18.

<sup>142</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.2.20.

<sup>143</sup> Also of significance is the fact that while it is the Romans who claim to be fighting for their own land, it is the Vandals who actually have families on that land. Cf. Rossi (2004: 9-10, 17-53), on Virgil, epic, rhetoric, and tragedy.

<sup>144</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.2.21.

<sup>145</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.2.22.

achieve success.<sup>146</sup> Instead, both generals appeal to their men's emotions, patriotism, and personal bravery. Plus, it is also clear that there is a close correspondence between the two exhortations. We saw that the end of Belisarius' speech leads into the beginning of Gelimer's. Even the issues stressed are similar, and complimentary. So, while Belisarius stresses that numbers are not important, Gelimer tells his men that their superior numbers will help them. Whereas Belisarius says that the Vandal concern over their loved ones will lessen their performance, and the death of Tzazon does turn out to be quite significant, Gelimer tells his men that for that very reason they must fight harder. There is one last point to highlight about the Battle of Tricamarum: in this particular battle there are three separate exhortations. Moreover, what makes this unique is not the fact that there are more than two exhortations, but rather that the additional exhortation is given by a third commander. We have Belisarius' exhortation to the Roman forces, Gelimer's exhortation to his African Vandals, and then Tzazon's exhortation to the Sardinian Vandals. Yet again, the exhortations from a particular description of battle often correspond to each other to a considerable degree: it is as if the second general was responding to the points made by the first general, even though they are done for the benefit of Procopius' audience. Also, the exhortations of the *Vandal Wars* often stress issues – morale, ideology, religion, and emotions – that are not as prevalent in the exhortations of the *Persian Wars*. Clearly then, using Tricamarum as a case study, we can see that there are significant differences between the exhortations in the *Persian Wars* and the exhortations in the *Vandal Wars*.

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<sup>146</sup> There is, however, some tactical discussion in the exhortations of the Battle of Mammes; furthermore, just as between the first two exhortations in the Battle of Tricamarum, there is a close correspondence between the speech of Solomon and the speech of the Berber leaders.



## Textual Unity and Internal Referencing

One feature highlighted by a handful of scholars is the unity of the *Vandal Wars*, with the general point being that this part of the text betrays more evidence of unity than any other part of the *Wars*.<sup>147</sup> There are good reasons for this postulation, though I shall also argue that there are also markers which tie the *Vandal Wars* to the whole. Let us begin by surveying examples of foreshadowing, as well as other examples of internal referencing in the text, from both the introduction and beyond.

Both Evans and Kaldellis correctly note that the introduction to the *Vandal Wars* prepares the reader for what is to follow,<sup>148</sup> and, as I noted earlier, the situation as presented in the introduction is often the reverse of what will later transpire. So, not long after we first meet Gaizeric Procopius says: “Gaizeric, taking advantage of the negligence of Basiliscus, did the following.”<sup>149</sup> This looks forward to the Roman Belisarius who takes advantage of the folly of Gelimer, ultimately leading his force to victory, while marking out a theme I discuss later, the importance of able generalship.<sup>150</sup> A couple of chapters later we find the Vandals roughing up the Christian Romans, a practice that Belisarius is keen that his soldiers later avoid.<sup>151</sup> While sailing to Africa Belisarius and the expeditionary forces are often dogged by poor weather,<sup>152</sup> and when night came after they arrived in Malea, the ships find themselves in peril, crowded in a narrow space. Fortunately for the Romans, the sailors remain calm, communicate effectively, and manage to use their poles to push

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<sup>147</sup> Evans 1972: 63; Treadgold 2007: 197.

<sup>148</sup> Evans 1972: 61; Kaldellis 2004: 179.

<sup>149</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.6.12.

<sup>150</sup> Below, in part III (pp. 238-245), when I discuss characterization and generalship I argue that one of the key themes of the text, as argued by Procopius, is the importance of good generalship, and that it is this that prevented Rome from re-taking Africa in 468, and Gelimer from holding off Belisarius in 533/534.

<sup>151</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.8.20.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. Brodka 2004: 73-75.

off the neighbouring ships.<sup>153</sup> This is in stark contrast to what had transpired during the Battle of Cape Bon, when the similar efforts of the Roman sailors are unsuccessful.<sup>154</sup> Where the Romans earlier met with disaster, they are now meeting with success. Indeed, a few chapters later Procopius intervenes, noting that the presence of abundance of water presaged an easy victory.<sup>155</sup> Below I relate the incident involving the drunken murder committed by two Massegetae.<sup>156</sup> At the conclusion of this event, the Huns do not surface until book four. At this point they decide to hold back from the war until a victor emerges.<sup>157</sup> Though these two events appear, at least at first sight, to be isolated incidents, in the earlier incident Procopius is surely alluding to the continued problems that these barbarians would cause for the Romans. Indeed, in this same sequence Procopius notes the actions of the Carthaginian Laurus, who is later charged with treason,<sup>158</sup> in the course of which he pauses the narrative to note that this man had been attempting to court the Massagetae through all manner of gifts.<sup>159</sup> This reference to Laurus brings together the two events, the earlier impaling of the Massagetae, and Belisarius' current attempts to win the Huns over with presents.<sup>160</sup> As this survey has pointed out, there

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<sup>153</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.13.5-7.

<sup>154</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.6.19-20. cf. Hom. *Il.* 9.487-488.

<sup>155</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.15.35.

<sup>156</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.12.7ff; and below pp 231-232.

<sup>157</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.1.5ff. According to Thompson (1996: 23), it was common practice for classicizing authors to associate the Huns with the earlier Herodotean Massagetae (1.216). Herodotus is indeed the most likely source for this name, and interestingly enough, and historicity aside, Herodotus had noted the tendency of the Massagetae to be drunk on the smoke of a certain plant (1.202). Thompson (1996: 41) notes that Theodoret, though not necessarily a classicizing author, does so. Claudian (*in Rufin.* 1.328), who most certainly is, does the same. Maenchen-Helfen (1973: 4) adds Themistius, and significantly for my purposes, Procopius to the list of authors who equate the Massagetae with the Huns. On the other hand, Batty (2007: 372-374) discusses Ammianus Marcellinus' (31.2.12) association of the Massagetae with the Alans.

<sup>158</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.1.8.

<sup>159</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.1.9.

<sup>160</sup> The Huns and Massagetae are mentioned as the same peoples by Procopius at 3.18.12-13.

are a considerable number of places where Procopius alludes to the interconnectedness of events, and text, in the *Vandal Wars*.

Besides the references to events within the *Vandal Wars*, there are also references to events in both the *Persian Wars* and the *Gothic Wars*. A common feature of warfare in the *Gothic Wars*, as we shall see, is Procopius' focus on gruesomeness. This sort of graphic detail is not found in the *Persian Wars*, and it first surfaces here in the *Vandal Wars*, though not yet in the form it would later take when Procopius is describing events in Italy, especially during the siege of Rome. At 3.23.17-18 Procopius tells us where Diogenes suffers his wounds, though he does not attribute his injuries to single blows or single combat, nor does he describe protruding missiles. These sorts of details increase significantly in book four, particularly as we move closer to the text's conclusion. There is horrid a scene a bit later in which Aigan is hacked to pieces,<sup>161</sup> and his companion Rufinus has his head chopped off, and then taken as a trophy, by the Berber commander Medisinissas.<sup>162</sup> The scene most evocative of the *Gothic Wars* rather significantly comes towards the end of the *Vandal Wars*. We find more gruesome detail and, notably, it comes as the result of a single shot, which, as with the episodes in the *Gothic Wars*, fells a combatant. John successfully hits Stotzas in the groin with one shot from his bow, a blow which, miraculously to the modern reader, kills the mutineer.<sup>163</sup> The last such gory episode comes when Artasires chops off a piece of Gotharis' head.<sup>164</sup> With Gontharis seriously wounded, Artabanus finishes him off by plunging a sword into his left side.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.10.10: κρεουργηθεις.

<sup>162</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.10.11: τῆς τε κεφαλῆς ἀπὸνάφαιρεῖται. On Medisinissas see Modéran (2003: 435).

<sup>163</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.24.11.

<sup>164</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.28.27.

<sup>165</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.28.29.

Gruesome details aside, there are other more direct means of alluding to the *Gothic Wars*. So, while camping at Tricamarum Procopius includes a *prolepsis* which looks forward to victory in Italy, and which involves the burning of the tips of spears.<sup>166</sup> As noted at the start of the paragraph, besides looking forward, Procopius also looks back. In the course of his description of the Battle of Tricamarum Procopius refers to the approach of the Vandals while the Romans were eating their meal.<sup>167</sup> The event seems innocuous enough, but if we go back to the Battle of Callinicum,<sup>168</sup> as well as the skirmish around Nisibis we find the Romans caught in a similar predicament.<sup>169</sup> Soldiers would presumably always eat before combat,<sup>170</sup> and so when Procopius does note this fact, it is surely significant. Earlier Belisarius had been aware of the dangers with eating too soon and had warned his commander Peter of this. What is most surprising about this particular episode is that he seems to have forgotten the advice that he had given earlier.

During the second phase of the assault at Mt. Aurasium, an unnamed Roman decides to scale the tower.<sup>171</sup> While making his ascent he is ridiculed by the Berber women above, in a scene which echoes the taunting of Khusro at Amida from the *Persian Wars*.<sup>172</sup> Then as now, this hubristic act on the part of women presages their side's eventual defeat. While describing the *Vandal Wars*, then, Procopius is cognizant not only of the relationship of events within, but also of the relationship of events without, in other words, with the text at large.

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<sup>166</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.2.5-7.

<sup>167</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.1.

<sup>168</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.18.15.

<sup>169</sup> Procop. *Wars* 2.18.17.

<sup>170</sup> Onas. 12; Veg. *Mil.* 3.11.3.

<sup>171</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.20.26. On the battle see Rubin (1957: 425) and Syväne (2004: 466).

<sup>172</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.7.18.

## **Part II: The Nature of Warfare**<sup>173</sup>

I now turn to the nature of the combat described by Procopius. As with the *Persian Wars* and the *Vandal Wars*, the battles described here have a distinct character. As I did in the last chapter, here I shall look at some of the theory that underscores Procopius' descriptions. I shall also look more closely at the specific correspondences with military manuals. Before I get into these matters, however, I want to explore the general nature of the warfare described, which is remarkable for the limited number of pitched battles included, and where they are, the general lack of detail concerning the actual fighting. Procopius is more concerned with the actors involved, and what the battle means, than with what happens, a practice we did not find in the *Persian Wars*, and, generally, we will not find in the *Gothic Wars*.

### **Guerrilla Warfare and the Absence of Fighting**

As with the battles described in the respective sections (*Persian Wars*, *Gothic Wars*) of the rest of the *Wars*, those found in the *Vandal Wars* have a distinctive character. The most distinctive feature is arguably the emphasis on small-scale guerrilla-style combat, and the pronounced absence of descriptions of fighting itself in Procopius' battles in the *Vandal Wars*.

Book three is generally devoid of combat, with the exception of the Battle of Cape Bon, and the decisive Battle of Decimum. The description of the former, one of the briefest in the text, is restricted to the collision of the ships at sea. On the other hand the latter, the description of which takes up two chapters, only mentions combat in passing.<sup>174</sup> Procopius notes that Ammatas and his team of Vandals kill a

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<sup>173</sup> Bravery, Fear, and encirclement are almost as prevalent in the *Vandal Wars* as they are in the *Persian Wars*. As such, I have decided not to include a discussion of those, no less important, elements.

<sup>174</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.18.1-3.19.33.

host of John's men.<sup>175</sup> A few lines later, the historian merely notes that John and his men kill all those they encounter while they flee.<sup>176</sup> One of the major phases of the battle is restricted to a couple of lines: "The Vandals did not await those charging them, but, having broken their line, barely perceived the battle and were all shamefully destroyed."<sup>177</sup> In the next chapter are some exhortations, more of Procopius' interventions, and considerable discussion of tactical concerns, and possibilities.<sup>178</sup> When Procopius turns to the other major battle of the text in book four, Tricamarum, we find one of the few exceptions to his *Vandal Wars* practice. In it are more traditional elements, such as the disposition of the respective troops in the battle lines,<sup>179</sup> the attempts by the generals to encourage the troops,<sup>180</sup> and a series of sallies that presumably are meant to include some fighting.<sup>181</sup> Even here, however, the fighting is generally atypical. There is no exchange of arrows, limited discussion of the close-quarters fighting, and only the faintest of references to the integrity of the respective lines.<sup>182</sup> Once the conquest phase of the war ends, with the possible exception of Mammes, the warfare described is by and large restricted to guerrilla-style small-scale encounters. The engagement round Mt. Bourgaon is little more than a stand-off.<sup>183</sup> What fighting there is centres on the adjacent peak

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<sup>175</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.18.5-6.

<sup>176</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.18.10.

<sup>177</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.18.19. The lack of attention to the fighting might be because Procopius was not privy to the information about the battle itself, a point suggested by the following line at 3.19.1. Nevertheless, there are many other battles in which he would not have been present, such as the Battle of Busta Gallorum, and yet in these he still provides considerable detail about the fighting itself.

<sup>178</sup> Tactical concerns and interventions: Procop. *Wars* 3.19.11.13, 3.19.26-28..

<sup>179</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.4-8.

<sup>180</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.9. In this case it is Gelimer specifically described as wandering through the ranks exhorting his troops.

<sup>181</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.10-15.

<sup>182</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.15.

<sup>183</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.12.4,22.

stratagem, and the panic and flight that it causes.<sup>184</sup> Indeed, Procopius expressly states that the Berbers have no intention of engaging the Romans in open combat following their thumping at Mammes.<sup>185</sup> The siege, if one can call it that, of Mt. Aurasium, is filled with the same lack of interest in fighting.<sup>186</sup> Towards the end of book four, when the focus of the warfare described turns to that between Roman and Roman, we find more of the same.<sup>187</sup> Although military matters dominate events in the *Vandal Wars* just as they do in the rest of the *Wars*, as we have just seen, little of that is specifically concerned with fighting itself. Bearing this in mind, it is time to turn to what military issues Procopius does then focus on.

### **Morale and Discipline**

Morale is no less relevant in the *Vandal Wars* than it was in the *Persian Wars*. In fact, in the rest of the narrative (that is outside of the battles) morale plays a big role both for the soldiers and the civilians, though this is not the place to discuss those other aspects. We saw above that to a certain degree morale was emphasized more in the exhortations in the *Vandal Wars* than it was in the *Persian Wars*. Plus, some new elements associated with morale are introduced into the descriptions of battle, and some old ones are used in slightly different ways. Thus, there are a number of situations where the barbarian commander/s moves among his forces exhorting them on into battle: they are distinct from the artificial exhortations discussed above, and instead they seem to be the sorts of exhortations that we would most likely expect to have existed in an actual battle. The Romans on occasion apply techniques designed to frighten their enemies before they engage

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<sup>184</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.12.17: the description of the stratagem. The ensuing rout is described at 4.12.21-24.

<sup>185</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.12.4.

<sup>186</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.13.30.

<sup>187</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.26.10, 4.26.27.

them. So, we get the Romans yelling and shouting as they prepare to enter battle. We also find traditional elements such as the standard: it had a role clearly commensurate with its role during the Principate, though it seems to have been even more important in the *Vandal Wars* than in the *Persian Wars*. These then are some of the key factors. Let us now look at some of these issues in more detail.

The connection between discipline and generalship is prevalent in the *Vandal Wars* just as it had been in the *Persian Wars*.<sup>188</sup> Indeed, modern scholars have frequently remarked on the importance of discipline in the *Vandal Wars*.<sup>189</sup> Indiscipline can, and often does, lead to serious problems in battle. The Vandals fleeing following the first skirmish in the Battle of Ad Decimum travel in no order and in small groups.<sup>190</sup> As a result, they are cut down by the Romans.<sup>191</sup> In the Battle of Mt. Bourgaon, when the Berbers realize that they are being fired at from two sides, they decide to turn and flee; however, because they have limited escape options, they panic, their discipline lapses, and they flee through a narrow vale and end up trampling each other.<sup>192</sup> By the end of the stampede the body count is enormous, or so says Procopius.<sup>193</sup> In the Battle of Mammes Solomon and 500 troops charge one part of the Berber circle and, as a result, the Berbers pull back and retreat.<sup>194</sup> The Romans follow the fleeing Berbers and cut them down.<sup>195</sup> When a general turns and flees in battle the effect can be quite devastating, and if not in terms of the number of

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<sup>188</sup> One significant difference is that in the *Vandal Wars* we see it emphasized even more in the marches to and from battle (cf. 3.12.8-22; 3.16.1ff; 3.20.2; 3.20.22ff; 4.14.7ff, and here a mutiny arises when Belisarius is not there and the army lacks strong leadership; 4.15.17ff; 4.15.28ff; 4.17.28ff).

<sup>189</sup> See, for example, Bury (1923: 131), Stein (1949: 317), Evans (1972: 64), Brodka (2004: 83-84), and Whately (2008: 246).

<sup>190</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.18.8.

<sup>191</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.18.10ff.

<sup>192</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.12.22ff.

<sup>193</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.12.25.

<sup>194</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.11.51-54. Modéran (2003) does not discuss the battles which the Berbers waged against the Romans in the reconquest period in detail, though he does discuss the wars of which they were a part.

<sup>195</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.11.54.



casualties, then in psychological terms. At the end of the Battle of Tricamarum Gelimer considers turning back and renewing the fight, but quickly decides against this and turns in flight.<sup>196</sup> His kinsmen are shell-shocked, and turn and follow their leader both stunned and afraid.<sup>197</sup>

What are the ways that a commander could boost, maintain, or restore morale, and with it, discipline? In these examples discipline is tied to generalship, and in turn, connected to the importance of order, a feature frequently emphasized by the tactical authors, Maurice included. Belisarius, and the other commanders, deal with disciplinary problems in a host of circumstances; in a variety of different ways, and with varying success. If one feature stands out, it is Belisarius' multifaceted approach to these issues, as well as the important role that his own persona plays. One means of restoring order in battle was to yell at the troops. Belisarius does just that in the Battle of Ad Decimum and yells at the soldiers, and in particular Uliaris and the 800 guardsmen who fled when the Foederati reached them after they themselves had fled from the Vandals.<sup>198</sup> Belisarius also does this following the mad scramble for booty at the end of the Battle of Tricamarum.<sup>199</sup> Germanus also encounters some recalcitrant troops in the Battle of Scalae Veteres and ends up heaping abuse on those soldiers to try and restore order.<sup>200</sup> Sometimes, however, more drastic methods are required. Procopius describes some of the infidelities of the Huns at the start of the Battle of Tricamarum. In the middle of that discussion Procopius includes the story of a certain Laurus, who had been charged with treason.<sup>201</sup> As a result, Belisarius impales the man on a hill, thus sending a

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<sup>196</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.19-20.

<sup>197</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.20-21.

<sup>198</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.19.30.

<sup>199</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.4.7.

<sup>200</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.17.30.

<sup>201</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.1.8.

clear warning to would-be miscreants. Procopius even notes the unmistakable fear this instilled in the rest of the men: here fear has been twisted to the general's advantage. Commanders can also boost morale by riding through the ranks and exhorting their men.<sup>202</sup> Gelimer does this in the Battle of Tricamarum,<sup>203</sup> and Germanus seems to have done the same in the Battle of Scalae Veteres.<sup>204</sup> Finally, a commander could take matters into his own hands and charge the foe himself. Solomon does something along these lines in the Battle of Mammes. When he sees that his men are panicking, Solomon leaps down from his horse and urges his men to do the same.<sup>205</sup> The men then formed a *fulcum* to ward off missile fire and Solomon himself along with 500 men charge the circle of Berbers.<sup>206</sup> Procopius outlines a wide variety of different ways that a commander has to restore the morale of his troops.

Fear, the low point on the morale spectrum, can cause other problems besides indiscipline and the concomitant urge to flee. When the Vandals encounter their first Hun in the Battle of Ad Decimum they are stricken with panic and are unsure about how to react. As a result of the debilitating fear of this unknown, but reportedly (to the Vandals) warlike people, the Vandals do not withstand the attack and are all killed.<sup>207</sup> But, fear can affect both sides in battle. The *foederati* hear about the encounter between John and Ammatas and grow anxious; they do not

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<sup>202</sup> These examples are distinct from the exhortations created by Procopius and put into the mouth of the commanders; as noted they probably represent, and with considerable accuracy, how a commander actually did exhort his troops.

<sup>203</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.9.

<sup>204</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.17.24.

<sup>205</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.11.50.

<sup>206</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.11.51. On the *fulcum* see Rance (2004a, 2007a: 366-367).

Unfortunately Modéran does not specifically discuss the military characteristics of the Berbers, such as the camel circles described by Procopius, in his detailed monograph. Cf. Modéran 2003: 338-340.

<sup>207</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.18.19.

know what they ought to do.<sup>208</sup> Suddenly a dust cloud appears near the hills and a substantial force of Vandals rushes down upon them.<sup>209</sup> The two sides almost come to blows, but the foederati are too frightened of their foes and instead flee. This fear also seized Uliaris, Belisarius' guardsman.<sup>210</sup> In some cases, one army may even try to frighten their foes. When John makes his third charge in the Battle of Tricamarum they run with "much shouting and a great noise".<sup>211</sup> This clamour is surely meant to intimidate, or even frighten the Vandals. There are others things that can frighten soldiers besides the sight of their foes. The omen described by Procopius in the Battle of Tricamarum frightens the soldiers, even though it turned out to be a positive occurrence.<sup>212</sup> Much of the fear described here comes from a lack of knowledge of one's foe and the situation. During the early phase of the expedition, in the Thucydidean discussion between Belisarius, Archelaus, and the other Roman commanders, fear is highlighted as one thing that might lead to defeat.<sup>213</sup> As long as a commander can control this fear, success is likely to follow.<sup>214</sup> In sum, if there is one point to take from my discussion of discipline and morale, it is the importance that Procopius ties to the general in its maintenance.

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<sup>208</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.19.15.

<sup>209</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.19.15.

<sup>210</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.19.22-24.

<sup>211</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.13.

<sup>212</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.2.6-7.

<sup>213</sup> Procop. *Wars*. 3.14.1-2. On the Thucydidean points of contact see Evans (1972: 65), Pazdernik (2000: 160), and Kaldellis (2004: 265, n. 59). The Thucydidean passage that is paralleled here is found at Thuc. 6.47-50. On the other hand, the earlier council of war between Justinian and John the Cappadocian, among others, alludes to a similar passage in Herodotus. Cf. Procop. *Wars* 3.10-18-21, Hdt. 7.8-18, Evans (1972: 63), Pazdernik (1997: 148, 2000: 153-159), and Kaldellis (2004: 180-181).

<sup>214</sup> One of the express aims of the *Vandal Wars* is to provide military guidance for would-be generals. Note Procopius' comments at 3.14.1.

## The Standard

The standard makes its *Vandal Wars* debut in the Battle of Tricamarum; its placement at the beginning of this stage of the battle is surely significant.<sup>215</sup> Later, when describing the disposition of the Roman forces for the last stage of the battle, Procopius again highlights the standard.<sup>216</sup> Plus, during the third and successful charge, Procopius tells us that John took not only almost all of Belisarius' spearmen and guards, but also the general's standard before making his charge.<sup>217</sup> In the Battle of Scalae Veteres the standard of Germanus emboldened Stotzas. For, when he caught sight of the general's standard he decided to charge the man with the standard.<sup>218</sup> In this situation the standard is used as a marker, or, rather, as a target for one army's attack; it is also used, albeit indirectly, to embolden the opposing troops, for Stotzas exhorts his men when he sees Germanus' standard.<sup>219</sup> In that same battle we learn that even rebellious Roman soldiers hold their standards in high regard; when the mutineers are put to flight they abandon their ranks, but still manage to scoop up their standards.<sup>220</sup> In the Battle of Mt. Bourgaon the standard is used in an interesting new way, that is, as part of a stratagem to deceive the Berbers about the Romans' numbers. The Romans run into some trouble because the

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<sup>215</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.2.1.

<sup>216</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.5. I should point out that there are some discrepancies in Procopius' discussion of the standard. When he first introduces it, he says "and the standard (σημείον), which the Romans call *bandon* (βάνδον) (4.2.1)". Procopius calls the standard the general's standard (4.3.5, σημείον τὸ στρατηγικόν; 4.3.13, τὸ στρατηγικὸν σημείον) the next two times that he mentions it in this battle. Cf. Dennis (1981) on battle flags in Byzantine warfare. Maurice discusses flags and standards at various points in his treatise (*Strat.* 2.14, 2.15, 2.20, 7.1). Cf. Veg. *Mil.* 3.5.

<sup>217</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.13.

<sup>218</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.17.14.

<sup>219</sup> In this case the standard is clearly the general's. Still, if Maurice's *Strategikon* is any indication, there was a myriad of different standards in use by the Roman army. The standard, then, is yet another instance where there seems to be a correspondence between Procopius' and Maurice's respective works (though there are also some significant differences); many of the discussions of the use of the standard in Maurice's work have a parallel in Procopius' battle descriptions.

<sup>220</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.17.17.

Berbers manage to get an elevated position halfway up the mountain; as a result, they are not willing to engage the Romans on level ground.<sup>221</sup> Procopius notes that the Berbers left the peak unoccupied because they did not think that they could be attacked from that position.<sup>222</sup> To counteract this problem, Solomon sends Theodorus, the leader of the Excubitores, to go secretly to the summit on the east side of the mountain with 1,000 foot soldiers and some standards (τῶν σημείων τινῶν).<sup>223</sup> Once this special unit had reached their destination, they are to wait through the night until the morning and then, “displaying the standards to shoot”.<sup>224</sup> When daybreak comes, and Solomon sends the rest of the Roman troops to the base of the mountain to engage the Berbers, those soldiers are distraught when they see the seemingly foreign troops on the summit, not yet being able to distinguish them from their foes.<sup>225</sup> But, when they recognize that the standards are their own, they fight with extra vigour.<sup>226</sup> In addition, when the Berbers realize that they are surrounded, their morale dissipates and soon are scrambling to escape.<sup>227</sup> Thus, on this occasion, the standard serves two purposes: not only does it embolden the Roman soldiers, but it also adds to the panic of the Berbers.

Generally, the standards are protected at all costs, and care is taken to ensure that they are not left behind, which suggests that they are quite important. Although there are no battles where a standard is seized, or where the bearer falls and the army’s morale subsequently plummets, the fact that on at least one occasion a fleeing Roman army running in disorder still manages to take their standards with them suggests that they were still extremely vital objects.

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<sup>221</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.12.1ff.

<sup>222</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.12.7.

<sup>223</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.12.17.

<sup>224</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.12.17.

<sup>225</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.12.20.

<sup>226</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.12.21.

<sup>227</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.12.21.

## Plunder, Booty, and the Characterization of the Roman Army

Procopius' characterizations of the Roman army are more complementary in the *Vandal Wars* than they are in the *Persian Wars*. The Roman army described by Procopius in the *Persian Wars* had a penchant for plundering; and in many cases the main focus of the army seems to have been a search for booty. Plunder and booty are an aspect that surfaces again, but it seems to be of even greater importance to the narratives here; moreover, it is a problem not only for the indigenous Roman soldiers but also for their allies, and in particular, the Huns. In fact, in some of the seditions booty, or rather the fear of the soldiers or allies that they may not get their due share of booty, is the cause of their discontent. Thus, despite the fact that the characterization of the Roman army is in many ways more favourable in the *Vandal Wars* than it had been in the *Persian Wars*, Procopius certainly had his reservations, at least about certain issues. Given its relationship to the characterization of the armies, I shall examine the propensity to plunder in the *Vandal Wars*, both on its own merits, and in this regard.

In the Battle of Cape Bon, as the Roman ships smoulder in the bay, the Vandals start carrying both the soldiers and their weapons off the sinking ships.<sup>228</sup> this action in this programmatic-battle highlights the fact that plunder is going to be an important objective of the military engagements, only here the Romans are the victims.<sup>229</sup> Plunder and booty surface again at the start of the Battle of Tricamarum and it promises to be a key issue in the outcome of this battle. The Huns, the Romans' wayward allies, were concerned about being robbed of their deserved

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<sup>228</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.6.21.

<sup>229</sup> As with the comparison noted earlier, Basiliscus and Belisarius (above pp. 191-196), the situation here is reversed.

booty following Roman victories.<sup>230</sup> One tactic that Belisarius employs to ease their concerns is to shower the Huns with gifts before the fighting begins.<sup>231</sup> This seems to work because the Huns do not jeopardize the Roman army's success in the battle. It is not only the barbarians, however, that have a penchant for plundering: the regular contingents of the Roman army are not immune to the allure of booty. Plunder takes up most of the last stage of the Battle of Tricamarum. After the death of the prominent Vandals and their concordant flight, the Romans turn almost immediately to their corpses and remove the gold from their bodies.<sup>232</sup> But, it is when Gelimer himself and his kinsmen turn and flee that the booty-driven feeding frenzy really begins.<sup>233</sup> The key factor, as described by Procopius, is the sheer volume of booty that the Vandals had left behind, and he emphasizes this through a negation: "They found in this camp such an incredible quantity of goods as had never been in one place."<sup>234</sup> Procopius then tells us that the Vandal plundering of Roman property had been going on for years, and that their land was incredibly fertile. Whether or not this is meant to justify the Romans' actions is another matter, though this may be what Procopius is implying. From there the situation deteriorates; the success in battle is threatened due to the reckless plundering of the Roman soldiers: it is important to note that at this stage the Huns, who had complained about booty at the beginning of the battle, are not mentioned in the narrative which follows. One particular passage that gives us a clear exposition of the problems with the Roman army at this point— though it also includes an important exception — comes at the end of the Battle of Tricamarum:

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<sup>230</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.1.10-11.

<sup>231</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.1.9.

<sup>232</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.17.

<sup>233</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.20-22.

<sup>234</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.25.

For the soldiers being extremely poor men having become all of a sudden masters of a great deal of money, and of bodies [women] in their prime and extremely good-looking, were no longer able to check their minds or to find any satiety in their possessions, but were so drunk, being drenched by their current good fortunes, that each one wanted to take everything himself back to Carthage. And they were going about not in squadrons, but alone or by twos, wherever hope led them, searching everything roundabout in the valleys and the rough country and wherever a cave turned up or anything that might lead them into danger or an ambush.<sup>235</sup>

At this point it is clear that greed has taken over the army, and as a result the soldiers are leaving themselves vulnerable to a possible Vandal counter-attack. Belisarius is rightfully concerned and it is not until the following day that he is able to restore order.<sup>236</sup> After the Battle of Mammes the narrative ends with the Romans gathering and enslaving all of the Berber women and children.<sup>237</sup> In addition, the Romans take all of the camels as booty.<sup>238</sup> Following the Battle of Mt. Bourgaon the Romans round up even more Berber women and children as booty to the point where, “they could sell a Berber boy for the price of a sheep to those who wished to buy.”<sup>239</sup> Towards the end of the Battle of Scalae Veteres plunder rears its head; yet again, the Romans put themselves into the same sorts of problems that they had following the Battle of Tricamarum: “There the soldiers seized the valuables with no trouble and did not take into consideration their opponents and did not obey the exhortations of their general any more, being in the presence of loot.”<sup>240</sup> Again, it takes some desperate pleading on the part of the Roman general, in this case Germanus, to bring things under control. Clearly, plunder is a serious problem.

Besides referring to the propensity to plunder in the fighting itself, Procopius also refers to the penchant for plundering in two of the battle exhortations. The

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<sup>235</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.4.3-4. On the reckless behaviour of these soldiers and the problems it gives them later in Africa see Kaegi (1981: 45-50).

<sup>236</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.4.1.

<sup>237</sup> Cf. Modéran 2003: 340-341.

<sup>238</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.11.56.

<sup>239</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.12.28.

<sup>240</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.17.29.



leaders of the Berbers – no names are given – in their exhortation to their troops before the Battle of Mammes tell them that they have much to fight for because if they lose, they will be enslaved.<sup>241</sup> Prior to the Battle of Mt. Aurasium Belisarius gives an exhortation to the imperial troops.<sup>242</sup> First, Belisarius points out that the imperial troops will be fighting against kinsmen; but he assures them that they themselves did not begin the battle but were drawn into it by their rebellious peers. Thus, the friendship bonds are immaterial for friends they were no more. Then, and of particular relevance for this discussion, Belisarius says the following:

That the men who are lined up against us are enemies and barbarians and whatever worse name someone might call them is shown not only by Libya which has been plundered by their hands, or by those who live here who have been wrongly killed by them, but also by the many Roman soldiers, whom these hostiles have dared to kill, although the only charge that they can level at them is that they are loyal to the state.<sup>243</sup>

There is one further exhortation that specifically refers to plunder and it comes from Stotzas and follows the Battle of Mt. Aurasium. On this occasion the loyal Roman troops have lined up – Procopius even names the arrangement of the loyalist forces – , are prepared to fight against the mutinous troops, and are about to engage them when Stotzas goes before them.<sup>244</sup> In his exhortation Stotzas tells the soldiers that they have suffered the same problems as the rebellious ones, and those problems include payments in arrears, and a lack of access to the plunder that is rightfully theirs.<sup>245</sup> The speech works and the rebellious army is now larger. So, throughout the *Vandal Wars* narrative plunder is presented, by and large, as a problem; now that we have identified the references, we need to examine its significance.

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<sup>241</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.11.40.

<sup>242</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.15.16ff.

<sup>243</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.15.20.

<sup>244</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.15.50-53.

<sup>245</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.15.55. The regular payment of soldiers was a serious problem for the army in the sixth century, on which see Jones (1964: 668-679), Kaegi (1981: 41-119), Whitby (1988: 165-169, 1995: 110-116, 2000a: 291-292), and Lee (2007a: 85-89, 2007b: 403-410).

In Procopius' narrative plunder is associated with the victors, which is what we would expect. Before battle commences in the Battle of Mammes we saw that the Berber commanders, whom Procopius did not think were significant enough to be named, argued that the Berbers should fight to prevent themselves from being enslaved – becoming booty – by the Romans.<sup>246</sup> This same concern led a certain John, a general under Basiliscus, to jump overboard to his death which he preferred to being captured by the Vandals at the end of the Battle of Cape Bon.<sup>247</sup> Throughout the descriptions of battle in the *Vandal Wars* then, and in these two examples in particular, the validity of the victorious side plundering the defeated side is not questioned. There are, however, two important stipulations associated with that implicit understanding between the armies pitted against each other in all of these battles: first, the plundering must be sanctioned by the officers to ensure order, and safety, following victory; second, that plunder should be accessible to all, regular and allied contingents alike. In regard to the first stipulation, when the Romans are successful and begin to plunder the enemy camps, it is not the plundering that is chastised, but the disorder that ensues and the potential danger that follows when the soldiers' booty lust is not checked. In the Battles of Tricamarum and Scalae Veteres the disorder nearly leads to disaster; similar disorder following seeming victory led to disaster on at least one occasion in the *Persian Wars*. In the Battle of Anglon in 543, after capturing a spy and some heated debate, the Romans march off in disorder ready for plunder. Although they manage to deploy themselves when they encounter Naved's Persian forces, they suffer heavy casualties and are

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<sup>246</sup> It is clear that Procopius considers humans to be an object of plunder. So, men, women, and children can be just as valuable to a successful army as weapons and expensive goods.

<sup>247</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.6.24.

defeated.<sup>248</sup> In all of these cases the men ignored their commanders, and this put the army at a serious disadvantage. From the point of view of the officers, as long as the army did not leave itself vulnerable to attack, there was no problem.

The second stipulation associated with plunder was its accessibility. We have already looked at the concerns of the allied Hun units in some detail, but what about the regular Roman units? In the midst of the series of mutinies in book four Belisarius in the Battle of Mr. Aurasium states that one of the charges that the loyalist troops can level at the rebellious troops is that Libya has been plundered at their hands. Yet, in a later exhortation, before a battle that does not materialize, Stotzas tells the loyalist troops lined up against him that all of the troops, both friend and foe, have not received their due access to plunder. The speech works and this group of loyalist troops joins Stotzas' rebellious force. Procopius is keen to highlight some of the problems experienced by the soldiers. Twice Procopius links the problems with plunder to the poverty of the soldiers.<sup>249</sup> Plus, he also claims through one of Belisarius' exhortations that the only charge<sup>250</sup> – and judging by his language a legitimate charge – that the rebellious troops can level at the loyalist troops is that they have been loyal to the state. Procopius berates Justinian for not paying the soldiers in the *Secret History*,<sup>251</sup> and here, though more subtly, he seems to be substantiating that complaint; plus, his comments about the mad search for plunder following the Battle of Tricamarum seem to absolve the soldiers of much blame. In sum, Procopius argues in the battles of the *Vandal Wars* that plunder is only a problem when it is not checked by the officers, and when it is not evenly distributed.

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<sup>248</sup> Granted, the circumstances in this episode from the *Persian Wars* are a little different – the propensity to plunder arises before the battle even begins – but the same sorts of concerns are involved.

<sup>249</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.4.3 and 4.15.55.

<sup>250</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.15.20.

<sup>251</sup> Procop. *SH* 24.2ff.

It is when these factors are ignored that Procopius tends to cast the desire for plunder of the respective armies in a negative light.

### **Procopius and Military Treatises<sup>252</sup>**

Throughout the *Vandal Wars* Procopius gives us a lot about tactics and military doctrine both in the speeches of the characters involved and his own narrator interventions. Indeed, in some respects Procopius is keener to present the intellectual side of combat, rather than the combat itself. In this section I want to identify these comments, and look for parallels in the military treatises.

One of the first statements of military doctrine comes from the lips of Belisarius following the impaling of the Massagetae. Having called together his men he says the following:

If the words were given to men who were coming to war now for the first time, I would need a long time to persuade you, through my speech, how great a support justice is for gaining a [victory] trophy. For those who do not know well the fortunes of such contests think that the end of war is brought about through arms alone. But you, who have defeated an enemy many times who is not inferior to you in body and is who is by nature sufficiently manly, you who many times have been tested by your enemy, and, you are not ignorant, I think, that although it is men who are continually fighting in both armies, it is God who acts as judge and then decides who to give victory to in battle. Since things are indeed thus, it is fitting to give less attention to a healthy body, ability in arms, and any other preparation in war than to those things which depend upon God.<sup>253</sup>

The next 'philosophy of war' statement is only a few chapters later and, unsurprisingly, it too comes from the mouth of Belisarius; he notes that "warfare is by nature subject to the unexpected".<sup>254</sup> While describing the march to Carthage

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<sup>252</sup> Any number of points could have been discussed in this section, particularly, for example, the importance of discipline, particularly given its importance in the *Vandal Wars*. Nevertheless, I have decided, in the interests of brevity, to restrict myself to points that best correspond to the military doctrines, or rather, general maxims, found in the manuals for reasons that will become apparent at the end of this section.

<sup>253</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.12.12-14.

<sup>254</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.15.25.

Procopius notes that Belisarius sent ahead John the Armenian with 300 of his guardsmen to scout the route, while he put the allied Massagetae on the left, with he himself and his best troops in the rear.<sup>255</sup> The exhortation before Decimum provides the next set of statements. Here Belisarius stresses that practice leads to skill, and he tells his men to keep weapons and anything else that might slow them down, including their provisions, in their stockade.<sup>256</sup> Procopius then intervenes to tell us his tactical plans: he decides not to risk battle with the Vandals first, whom he had just noted his men were not familiar with, and instead sends forth some cavalry to test their foes.<sup>257</sup> When the text turns to the next major battle, Tricamarum, Belisarius modifies his statements noted at the start of this discussion: “for it is not by numbers of men or the measure of one’s body, but by the *arete* of the spirit that war is wont to be decided”.<sup>258</sup> When Belisarius leaves Africa, at least temporarily, and is replaced by Solomon, we find Procopius espousing different military doctrines, and ones more in keeping with those noted in the *Persian Wars*.<sup>259</sup> Solomon, during his first major contest with Berbers, prepares against being encircled by his foes.<sup>260</sup> In that same encounter, the Battle of Mammes, Solomon gives an exhortation in which he lays out his own doctrines. Early on he stresses the superiority in equipment that the Romans have over the Berbers.<sup>261</sup> A few lines later he says that firing arrows at the camels would bring confusion and disorder, traits in keeping with his comments about encirclement, because of their relationship to order in the battle

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<sup>255</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.17.1-3.

<sup>256</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.19.7-10.

<sup>257</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.19.11-13.

<sup>258</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.1.16.

<sup>259</sup> This fact, in and of itself, alludes to the potential trouble that the Berbers will give the Romans, for that is who Solomon fights against. On the conflict between Berbers and Romans see Modéran (2003: 607-644).

<sup>260</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.11.21.

<sup>261</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.11.25, 29.

line.<sup>262</sup> Then Solomon says: “for daring, when it is commensurate with ability, is perhaps of some profit to those who use it, though it leads to danger when it exceeds this”.<sup>263</sup> In the engagement around Mt. Bourgaon the primary objective is to take the peaks, thus being able to take the enemy from higher ground. The Berbers manage to take one hill, though to their detriment, they leave the other untouched.<sup>264</sup> In this same battle we find the stratagem in which Solomon attempts to deceive the Berber soldiers about the actual size of the Roman force.<sup>265</sup> A chapter later, during the skirmish at Tigisis, the Berbers fail to make adequate provisions and find themselves tired, thirsty, and so prone to attack.<sup>266</sup> Belisarius returns later in book four, and at the end of an exhortation he notes: “for it is not by means of the number of those fighting, but rather by the order and manliness that victory in war is wont to be measured”.<sup>267</sup> In the Battle of Scalae Veteres, when Germanus is the general in charge, he takes care to ensure that the rear of his line is reinforced in the hope of emboldening his men.<sup>268</sup> This is very much in keeping with the doctrine of Solomon noted above, with the exception being that Germanus here reinforces his rear through a novel way, that is, through the use of wagons.<sup>269</sup> Germanus’ usage of the doctrine which stresses order is more plausible here than it was against the Moors, as in this case he is arrayed against his fellow Romans under the leadership of Stotzas. The last notable comments about tactics come from our narrator Procopius later in the same battle:

When Stotzas came quite close to the enemy, and he saw the standard of Germanus, he exhorted those with him to move against him [Germanus]. But

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<sup>262</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.11.33.

<sup>263</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.11.35.

<sup>264</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.12.5-8.

<sup>265</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.12.17.

<sup>266</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.13.8.

<sup>267</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.15.29.

<sup>268</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.17.4.

<sup>269</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.17.4.

all the mutinous Heruls who happened to be arrayed with him [Stotzas], did not follow, but even prevented him with all their strength, saying that they did not know the power of Germanus, or what sort they were; however, they knew well that all those who were lined up on the right wing of the enemy would, by no means, be a match for them. Thus, if they proceeded against those men, these men would not withstand them and turn in flight, and, as is likely, throw the rest of the army into confusion; on the other hand, if they direct themselves towards Germanus and he drives them away, their entire cause will immediately be destroyed.<sup>270</sup>

These comments of Procopius, in regard to the thinking of the Heruls, describes well the reasoning behind the fear of being turned in flight, recognizing, as they do, that most casualties come in this part of a battle. These select examples, then, are representative of the sorts of tactical thinking employed, and espoused, throughout the *Vandal Wars*. How well do these mesh the views presented in some of the military manuals?

The first case, the selection from a speech of Belisarius,<sup>271</sup> essentially states that the ultimate arbiter of victory in battle is God.<sup>272</sup> Vegetius, though not exactly attributing all success to God, certainly recognizes his role in the Empire's ultimate success in war.<sup>273</sup> In the preface to Maurice's *Strategikon* the first entity named is God, and it is to him whom the author says directs matters.<sup>274</sup> In that same preface, and several lines later, the author claims that the two most important things are God and justice,<sup>275</sup> again in keeping with Procopius and Belisarius, and that "thus the best

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<sup>270</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.17.14-15.

<sup>271</sup> Syrianus, a possible contemporary of Procopius, refers to Belisarius in his text. See Syrianus Magister *peri Strat.* 33.35. My reasons for including Vegetius, who am I not suggesting Procopius read, is that his text is both extensive and, I feel, generally reflective of broader views held by other military thinkers. I also believe, in accordance with the views recently expounded by Charles (2007), that the text probably dates to the middle of the fifth century and so, perhaps, not as far removed from Procopius' time as one would at first believe. For detailed bibliography on Vegetius see Charles (2007); for Syrianus and Maurice see my discussion in chapter two above pp 120-124.

<sup>272</sup> Prayer is another matter, and we have at least one incident in which Belisarius prays before battle (*Wars* 3.19.11). Maurice would have been pleased (*Strat.* 8.2.1).

<sup>273</sup> See, for example, the two following passages: Veg. *Mil.* pref. 1, 2.5.3-4.

<sup>274</sup> Maurice *Strat.* pref. 1-3.

<sup>275</sup> Maurice *Strat.* pref. 36.

general is armed with the favour of God".<sup>276</sup> On the other hand, the *Peri Strategias* of Syrianus is not extant in full, and so for all we know, God may have been referred from the beginning in this text as well. With that said, at the start of chapter two God's role is outlined.<sup>277</sup> The unexpectedness of war features in the military manuals. Maurice, for one, says that a general should never be caught by surprise.<sup>278</sup> Syrianus alludes to the same thing, doing so by use of a quotation.<sup>279</sup> Syrianus and Maurice have different views as regards how the army should be deployed when marching through enemy territory. Syrianus, on the one hand, says that the generals should be on the side where an attack by the enemy is expected,<sup>280</sup> though generally they should be placed on one, or both flanks, depending on the type of 'phalanx'.<sup>281</sup> Syrianus also notes that some men should be sent ahead to scout the land, and that they should be mounted, and of a high standard.<sup>282</sup> In its original incarnation Maurice's handbook was concerned solely with cavalry; as such, the bulk of it is concerned with a mounted force, and so only partly of relevance to this discussion. While discussing the procedure for marching through enemy terrain Maurice does not specify where the general is to be placed, or even whether the best troops are to be kept at the rear. On the other hand, the baggage train is to be kept in the middle when the general fears an enemy attack.<sup>283</sup> If there is no danger of

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<sup>276</sup> Maurice *Strat.* pref. 45. cf. Maurice. *Strat.* 8.2.1.

<sup>277</sup> Syrianus Magister *peri strat.* 2.3-5. Although there is some doubt about whether the text was even written in the sixth century, in the absence of conclusive evidence I have decided to include it, while acknowledging that its ascription to the sixth century is by no means certain.

<sup>278</sup> Maurice *Strat.* pref. 53-55, 8.2.98.

<sup>279</sup> Syrianus Magister *peri strat.* 20.5-6. The quotation is from Polyaeus (*Stratagems* 3.9.17).

<sup>280</sup> Syrianus Magister *peri strat.* 20.20-23

<sup>281</sup> Syrianus Magister *peri strat.* 20.16-18.

<sup>282</sup> Syrianus Magister *peri strat.* 20.28-44.

<sup>283</sup> Maurice *Strat.* 9.3.87-88. As an aside, reading Procopius' narratives in light of the points made by the military theorists can inform us of the reasons for some of the actions. Thus, in the episode in the *Vandal Wars* to which I am referring here (3.17.3-4), Belisarius may have placed himself, and his best troops, at the rear of the column because he feared, or, expected, an attack from the rear. On the other hand, I should note that there was one school of thought which stressed that the general should not be at the front of the line.



attack, the general is to be placed at the front along with his best troops.<sup>284</sup> In chapter twelve, however, the later addition in which he does discuss mixed formations he says that, in keeping with Belisarius' practice, cavalry should be sent ahead, though he also suggests that they be sent to the rear.<sup>285</sup> All of the points that I have highlighted from Belisarius' exhortation before Decimum surface in the military treatises. Vegetius, in a section devoted to military exercises, notes that it is through continual exercise that the art of war is transmitted.<sup>286</sup> Indeed, the heading of the first section in chapter one is: "The Romans Defeated All Peoples by the Training in Arms Alone".<sup>287</sup> The second maxim from Maurice's list of military sayings stresses the importance of training.<sup>288</sup> In his chapter devoted to the baggage train, when leaving an encampment to attack an enemy Maurice recommends that only essentials be brought along.<sup>289</sup> Maurice cautions against attacking an enemy with which the general is unfamiliar.<sup>290</sup> Syrianus too considers the matter of great importance, devoting an entire section to when to engage an enemy in battle in which the first point noted is gathering intelligence on one's foes.<sup>291</sup> Unsurprisingly, Vegetius discusses similar issues.<sup>292</sup> *Andreia* or *virtus* are singled out as important factors in one's success by both Vegetius and Maurice; indeed, the two authors include near identical entries in their respective lists of maxims.<sup>293</sup> As noted above, the doctrines espoused by Solomon and Germanus largely stress the importance of

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Indeed, in the *Gothic Wars* Procopius refers to the problems an overly active general can cause. See chapter five below pp 293-301.

<sup>284</sup> Maurice *Strat.* 1.9.29-35.

<sup>285</sup> Maurice *Strat.* 12.B.19.2.

<sup>286</sup> Veg. *Mil.* 2.23.6-10.

<sup>287</sup> Veg. *Mil.* 1.1.1.

<sup>288</sup> Maurice *Strat.* 8.2.2.

<sup>289</sup> Maurice *Strat.* 5.3.

<sup>290</sup> Maurice *Strat.* 7.A.1.25-27.

<sup>291</sup> Syrianus Magister *peri strat.* 33.2-6.

<sup>292</sup> Veg. *Mil.* 3.9.4-7.

<sup>293</sup> Veg. *Mil.* 3.26.10: *amplius iuvat virtus quam multitudo*; Maurice *Strat.* 8.2.8.21-22:

ἀνδρεία μᾶλλον καὶ τάξις ἢ πλῆθος τῶν μαχομένων οἶδεν εὐεργετεῖν.

order in the battle line. In chapter two I noted that this was one of the main strands of thinking among Greek military theorists.<sup>294</sup> This also has currency among more contemporary military theorists, Romans included.<sup>295</sup> Once a battle-line is breached, the rout that ensues is the place in which most casualties ensue; thus, all three writers noted here discuss the rout at some point or other.<sup>296</sup> An issue which surfaces time and again both in Procopius' *Wars* and the military treatises is the issue of troop numbers. All advocate finding out the enemy's numbers, and both Vegetius and Maurice note that numbers alone are not sufficient to ensure success.<sup>297</sup> Besides noting that numbers are not the most important factor, Maurice also provides the means of deceiving an enemy as regards one's own troop numbers.<sup>298</sup> The importance of adequate provisions, so preventing oneself from being weakened by lack thereof, is constantly stressed.<sup>299</sup> Finally, equipment too is seen to play an important part, particularly when one is seen to be coming up against an inferior foe.<sup>300</sup> Indeed, it should be noted that one of the principal problems with his contemporary army that Vegetius rails against is their poor equipment.<sup>301</sup> In sum, though I have only looked a few passages from the *Wars*, and these three theoreticians, it is representative. We should not be surprised that there is a close

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<sup>294</sup> See above pp. 81-91.

<sup>295</sup> Most of Vegetius' treatise is concerned with training, order, and the recreation of the old legion. See, for example, the extended discussion at 3.14. Syrianus excerpts, and abridges, some of the earlier discussions on the phalanx; he even devotes an entire chapter to tactics (14). Maurice is no exception, for he devotes a considerable proportion of his text to both cavalry and infantry formations. In this chapter three is particularly noteworthy.

<sup>296</sup> Veg. *Mil.* 3.22, 3.25; Syrianus Magister *peri Strat.* 38. Interestingly, most of Maurice's discussion of the rout centres on what to do when engaged in the pursuit of a fleeing enemy. See, for example, Maurice *Strat.* 8.1.22. Cf. Veg. *Mil.* 3.26.16.

<sup>297</sup> See, for example, the following passages, both of which I referred to above: Veg. *Mil.* 3.26.10, Maurice *Strat.* 8.2.8.21-22.

<sup>298</sup> Maurice *Strat.* 8.2.38.

<sup>299</sup> As regards foods and provisions, see, for example, the following passages: Veg. *Mil.* 3.26.17; Syrianus Magister *peri Strat.* 6.30-32; Maurice *Strat.* 8.1.30.

<sup>300</sup> Maurice's so-called '*ethnika*' (11), on which see Wiita (1977), is particularly illustrative in this regard. Cf. Syrianus Magister *peri Strat.* 16, in which he discusses the sorts of equipment to be used.

<sup>301</sup> Veg. *Mil.* 1.20.

correspondence between military doctrine noted by Procopius, and the factors discussed by Vegetius, Syrianus, and Maurice. Furthermore, it is no coincidence that the bulk of the points noted by Procopius correspond with the maxims listed by both Vegetius and Maurice. Neither of their lists were original constructions; as such, the points included had widespread, and longstanding, currency amongst ancient military thinkers. We would expect Procopius to include a number of them, though we cannot say whether he got them from those officers he served with, or military manuals he may have read. In truth, it was probably some combination of both possibilities.<sup>302</sup> With the specifically military matters now discussed, it is time to turn to the related issue of Belisarius, and Procopius' characterization of the man, and his leadership abilities.

### **Part III: Characterization and Generalship**

In the last chapter I looked at Belisarius' generalship in relation to that other major figure in the *Persian Wars*. To a lesser extent I shall do the same thing here, though the other characters, such as Gelimer and Solomon, will be discussed more as comparanda rather than as stand alone figures.

Generalship, or, rather, the characterization of the leadership of Belisarius, is a topic that has garnered much attention by those scholars who have turned their attention to the *Vandal Wars*.<sup>303</sup> A basic dichotomy has emerged, with Belisarius regarded as an exceptional general on account of his brilliant victory over the Vandals on the one hand, and with Belisarius as a lucky general, or at least one whose abilities have been exaggerated on the other hand. Diehl's opinion of

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<sup>302</sup> On the other hand, if Procopius had only read selections of military treatises, one thinks that this is the bit – the list of general maxims that is – that he is most likely to have read. As I noted above in chapter two (p. 112), Agathias (2.9.2) claims to have read at least one military treatise.

<sup>303</sup> On characterization in ancient historiography in general see Pitcher 2007.

Belisarius is mixed at best, highlighting the general's carelessness, and his over dependence on good fortune.<sup>304</sup> Bury's is more measured, noting his disciplining of poorly behaving troops, while also remarking that Gelimer and the Vandals essentially handed victory to the Romans.<sup>305</sup> The same is true for Stein, at least as regards his victories in Africa, though he takes the line that Procopius generally praised Belisarius, though not consistently.<sup>306</sup> Evans notes that the expedition was led by "an able commander", though he is cognizant of Procopius' characterization of Belisarius.<sup>307</sup> Cameron tends to see Procopius' characterization of Belisarius in the *Vandal Wars* as glorification, particularly in regard to the general's triumph.<sup>308</sup> Beck, in his short book on Procopius, claims that the Roman victory was down to intelligent leadership of Belisarius, though like Cameron, he notes Procopius' role in creating this picture.<sup>309</sup> Pazdernik characterizes Procopius' characterization of Belisarius as nuanced, in turn noting the subtle criticism, stressed through an allusion to Xenophon's *Hellenica*,<sup>310</sup> as well as the abilities that the general had, particularly when paralleled with Brasidas, though here praising his control over his troops rather than his generalship per se.<sup>311</sup> Kaldellis, in the same vein as Diehl, accords Belisarius little credit for the success, and in fact argues that Belisarius' victory was not down to his virtue, but rather his good fortune.<sup>312</sup> Brodka, who speaks highly of Belisarius' leadership, recognizes the role that chance plays, and suggests that Belisarius, through Procopius' characterization, does deserve credit for his ability to work to neutralize the effects of the unexpected, while also being able to see any

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<sup>304</sup> Diehl 1896: 30-31.

<sup>305</sup> Bury 1923: 131, 135.

<sup>306</sup> Stein 1949: 314-317, 719-720.

<sup>307</sup> Evans 1972: 62-66; quote – p. 65.

<sup>308</sup> Cameron 1985: 176.

<sup>309</sup> Beck 1986: 43.

<sup>310</sup> Pazdernik 2006: 200-205.

<sup>311</sup> Pazdernik 2000: 152-171.

<sup>312</sup> Kaldellis 2004: 176-189. cf. Whitby 2007d: 73, 86.

advantage presented.<sup>313</sup> Treadgold also notes Procopius' praise for Belisarius' victory, though he notes that there are exceptions.<sup>314</sup> The purpose of my recounting of the bulk of the views on Procopius' characterization of Belisarius in the *Vandal Wars* has been to show that there is nothing in the way of consensus, and that the issue deserves further discussion. How does Procopius characterize Belisarius' generalship?

The performance of Belisarius in the *Vandal Wars* is meant to be compared with those commanders noted in the introduction.<sup>315</sup> Among other things, through this introduction Procopius is presenting us with the standard regarding generalship, and Africa, in the Roman past. In the first few lines, when Theodosius the Great is mentioned, Procopius says that "he had become an especially just man and good at warfare".<sup>316</sup> It may well be that Procopius is comparing Justinian with Theodosius, but it is Theodosius' military qualities which are significant in this regard here. A few chapters later we meet Aetius and Boniface, generals who are particularly strong and very experienced in war.<sup>317</sup> Of course, we must not forget the Vandals, for they too in the past had notable generals; Belisarius is to be measured against not only generals of the Roman past, but also those of his foes. How he performs is in no small measure determined by the performance of his enemies, and the same is true for his predecessors. Procopius says that Gaizeric was extremely well practised in warfare.<sup>318</sup> When he turns to the reconquest campaign of 468 he again highlights the Vandal general's abilities, in the process contrasting them with those of Basiliscus: "Now the hesitation of the general prevented this [victory], whether it was

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<sup>313</sup> Brodka 2004: 75-83.

<sup>314</sup> Treadgold 2007: 197.

<sup>315</sup> Evans 1972: 62-63.

<sup>316</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.1.2.

<sup>317</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.3.14.

<sup>318</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.3.24.

caused by cowardice or treason. Gaizeric, benefitting from the negligence of Basiliscus, did the following”.<sup>319</sup> Though Procopius is not sure which of the two possibilities led to failure, the fact that he raises them means that he felt that they were important; the following line then points out which one was most likely, namely cowardice. Several lines later we meet the principal contemporary Vandal commander Gelimer. Procopius notes that Gelimer is “the one who was thought to be the best warrior of the time”.<sup>320</sup> What is significant about this statement is that Procopius presents his ability in warfare as a possibility alone, for he does not say that he was the best, as he had with the earlier generals, only that he was thought to be the best, so implying that this opinion would later change. On the other hand, when Belisarius is introduced in the same chapter, this is what he has to say: “for he was clever at forming plans and would accomplish the plans without hesitation”.<sup>321</sup> Procopius presents it as fact, not conjecture. Also, in correspondence with what he had just said about Gelimer, Procopius notes that Belisarius was clever (ὄξυς) at forming plans,<sup>322</sup> while Gelimer was clever or cunning (δαινός). This more or less brings the introductory portion of the text to an end, as Procopius now moves the narrative into contemporary events. With these select characteristics outlined, we are to bear them in mind as Belisarius proceeds.

Belisarius, in good classicizing history fashion, gives a number of speeches throughout the *Vandal Wars*. A rather significant point is how Belisarius puts his men on the same level as his own, often referring to them as fellow soldiers. We find this in the first line of his first speech when he is discussing their options to his fellow

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<sup>319</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.6.11-12.

<sup>320</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.9.7.

<sup>321</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.9.25.

<sup>322</sup> ὄξυς can mean quick, though I think here we are meant to understand clever, as this best corresponds with what Procopius says about Gelimer. Plus, I do not think that Procopius would repeat himself, as he notes he carried the plans out without hesitation.

commanders (ξυνάρχοντες),<sup>323</sup> men who, I should add, Belisarius had supreme authority over despite his words.<sup>324</sup> When Belisarius first addresses the common soldiery he uses similar language (ἄνδρες συστρατιῶται).<sup>325</sup> In his return to Africa during the mutiny, he continues to address his men in the same way.<sup>326</sup> This was a practice endorsed by ancient writers, theoreticians in particular, throughout antiquity.<sup>327</sup> Besides his egalitarian approach to his *commilitones* Belisarius also vindicates Procopius' statements about his good planning. The discussion with Archelaus about the best place to land shows not only that Belisarius will not put himself on a level far above his fellow officers, but also that he is willing to take valuable advice, particularly if it benefits his planning, and his chances of successfully carrying out his objectives in Africa.<sup>328</sup> On the route to Carthage Belisarius takes great care to protect his column, and assuage any fears his soldiers might have.<sup>329</sup> While Belisarius is ensconced in Carthage, he has some discussions with the Huns about their willingness to fight with the Romans as previously agreed. Belisarius is rightly cautious, and with the Vandals not yet soundly defeated, he takes the necessary preparations to shore up Carthage's defences.<sup>330</sup> A few lines later,

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<sup>323</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.15.18.

<sup>324</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.11.18. cf. Pazdernik (1997: 158-159), his discussion is very much in keeping with what I have to say here. The same can be said for Brodka (2004: 77-79) as regards my discussion of Belisarius' planning.

<sup>325</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.19.2. The only Vandal commander to address his troops in the same way is Gelimer's brother Tzazon before Tricamarum (Procop. *Wars* 4.2.24). The Berber commanders, who are not named, also refer to their men as fellow soldiers before Mammes (Procop. *Wars* 4.11.38). Stotzas, in two separate exhortations, refers to his men as fellow-soldiers (Procop. *Wars* 4.15.54, 4.16.12). I think that the fact that it is Gelimer alone who does not address his troops in this manner, and ultimately fails, goes back to what Procopius had said earlier about Gelimer's concern for his own well-being alone (Procop. *Wars* 3.9.7-8).

<sup>326</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.15.16.

<sup>327</sup> Maurice (*Strat.* 8.1.1,3), for example, says that the general should act in a way that is not above his men. Theophylact (Theophyl. Sim. 3.1.7-9), on the other hand, describes an episode in 587 or 588 in which the failure of the general Priscus to follow an ancient custom and walk among his troops leads to trouble.

<sup>328</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.15.1-36. cf. Thuc. 6.47-49.

<sup>329</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.17.1-5.

<sup>330</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.1.7.

Procopius, the narrator, reminds the reader that Belisarius had prepared himself, and by proxy, the army, as best as possible, before an exhortation to his troops.<sup>331</sup> Significantly, Belisarius notes in that speech that he now has God on his side, a marked contrast to Gelimer, who, in a letter to his brother Tzazon, acknowledges that the opposite is true for him.<sup>332</sup> Where Belisarius alludes to the *arête* of his men in his speech before Tricamarum, Gelimer, in his corresponding speech,<sup>333</sup> implies that his men are suffering from a lack of *arete*, and, in Homeric fashion, the shame that comes with it.<sup>334</sup> As a result of this pronounced lack of courage, Gelimer must ride through the ranks before the battle begins to embolden his troops.<sup>335</sup> In this battle Gelimer performs his second major inexplicable action, for he jumps off his horse and flees towards Numidia, which is in stark contrast to Belisarius who from the beginning is keen to not only share the burdens of warfare with them, as the language he uses to address them suggests, but also takes great pains to plan his attacks, and does his utmost to ensure that they are carried out.<sup>336</sup> When Belisarius returns to Africa, and he seeks about restoring order during the mutiny of Stotzas, we find him not only employing a host of means of winning back the loyalty of the mutinous troops to the emperor, but also, again, much better prepared, and perceptive than his opponents.<sup>337</sup> Finally, during one phase of the Battle of Mt. Aurasium Procopius notes that Belisarius had arrayed and entrenched his troops

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<sup>331</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.1.12.

<sup>332</sup> Gelimer: Procop. *Wars* 3.25.11; Belisarius: Procop. *Wars* 4.1.21.

<sup>333</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.1.16.

<sup>334</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.2.15-17.

<sup>335</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.9.

<sup>336</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.3.20. Of course, Procopius does not claim that Belisarius was infallible, for at 4.4.1ff he notes that Belisarius, ever aware of the situation, grew frightened at the disorder following Tricamarum. Furthermore, he intervenes to tell us that the army would have perished had the Vandals turned against them. Yet, this does not happen, and Belisarius sets about restoring order, this time through a speech, which shows that the Roman general had a host of means at his disposal at keeping his men in line, from severe punishments, to promises of gifts, to personal direct appeals.

<sup>337</sup> On the rebellions in Africa and the late antique state see Van Nuffelen (2007).



next to the River Bagradas while the mutineers had put themselves in a difficult position.<sup>338</sup>

In this discussion there are points that I have left out. There are, of course, the famous interventions of Procopius before both Decimum and Tricamarum in which he alludes to the fact that the Vandals should have won if Gelimer had acted differently, while also noting that he seemed to have been motivated by more powerful forces. I also generally avoided discussing the issue of discipline and morale. Belisarius had to deal with discipline problems throughout, as most commentators have noted, and Procopius seems to suggest that it was Belisarius' absence which led to the later mutiny.<sup>339</sup> There are also a handful of moments in which Belisarius seems overwhelmed by the task before him, one example of which comes early in the narrative.<sup>340</sup> Yet, one of the primary points stressed by Brodka was Belisarius' ability to take advantage of the opportunities presented, in marked contrast to Gelimer.<sup>341</sup> Procopius refers to Belisarius' ability to do just that on a handful of occasions, particularly in book four, both implicitly and explicitly.<sup>342</sup> Both Belisarius and Gelimer were presented with the opportunity to emerge victorious in this war; the difference is that Gelimer failed to realize this, and so, take advantage of it. Kaldellis is right to highlight the role that fortune undoubtedly played in the outcome of the war, though we should not underestimate Belisarius' own role in the outcome. As noted, one of the traits for which Basiliscus draws Procopius' ire is his negligence during the attempted reconquest. By comparison, in his speech before Tricamarum, Belisarius notes that they, the Romans, should not put the war off by

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<sup>338</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.15.13.

<sup>339</sup> Evans 1972: 66.

<sup>340</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.14.1-2.

<sup>341</sup> Brodka 2004: 80-83.

<sup>342</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.1.22, 4.3.6, 4.15.42-44.

reason of negligence.<sup>343</sup> Procopius puts Belisarius in direct apposition to Basiliscus, who had a much superior force to that available to Belisarius.<sup>344</sup> On the other hand, he does the same to Gaizeric and Gelimer. Of course, there is a third pairing to go with these two sets of appositions: if Basiliscus is to Belisarius what Gelimer is to Gaizeric then it follows that Belisarius is the same to Gelimer. Indeed, I noticed above in a different context that many of the events from the introduction are presented in the form of mirror images, in other words, reversed in the central part of the narrative; it is no different with these central generals. Pazdernik is right to draw attention to the complex image of Belisarius that Procopius presents, for even though Belisarius has many laudable attributes, he is not without his faults.<sup>345</sup> Gelimer himself is not without positive traits, for even though it comes too late, he does eventually perceive his plight. Does Procopius glorify Belisarius? Strictly speaking, no. On the other hand, he is not divested of any role in the expedition's success. As we might well expect, the truth lies somewhere in the middle. Belisarius surely attains unimaginable success, and God is on his side. Yet, he consults his officers, plans carefully, and has moments where he loses confidence, and occasionally, the control of his troops.

### **Chapter Overview**

As with the *Persian Wars*, Procopius guides his readers through his narrative by introducing elements within the first few chapters that have set the course for subsequent events. In the *Vandal Wars*, however, Procopius the narrator engages much more directly with his audience by intervening in the text in the first person, and using names and numbers to mark out an episode's importance; unlike the

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<sup>343</sup> Procop. *Wars* 4.1.22.

<sup>344</sup> Procop. *Wars* 3.6.11.

<sup>345</sup> Pazdernik 1997, 2000, 2006.

*Persian Wars*, he also encourages the audience to other possible outcomes to the events described. Tactics play a role again, as do the leading commanders, though we find that morale has become a much more central feature of battle. There is thus considerable variety between the battles presented in the *Persian Wars* and the battles presented in the *Vandal Wars*. In the next chapter, focused on the *Gothic Wars*, we will see that Procopius takes this emphasis on consistency within his discussions of particular theatres even further, by introducing new elements which are specific to his description of the Italian campaign. Textual unity, here broadened to the *Wars* as a whole, will again open the chapter.

## Chapter 5: The Gothic Wars<sup>1</sup>

The *Gothic Wars* is one of the most contentious parts of the *Wars*. Firstly, either the Thucydidean parallels are most suspect here, or, the intertextual elements are most insightful. Secondly, the war that it describes is one of the most controversial aspects of the age of Justinian. Although this thesis is not explicitly focused on the historical reality, apart from the intellectual climate that emerges from a study of descriptions of battle in a traditional historical genre,<sup>2</sup> with this section of the *Wars* more than any other we are confronted with reality head on. On the one hand, a look at Malalas' *Chronicle*, or Evagrius' *Ecclesiastical History*, seems to confirm the arguments put forth by Kouroumalis<sup>3</sup> and Scott<sup>4</sup>, among others, that the wars with the Goths were peripheral to Justinian's frontier policy, behind Persia,<sup>5</sup> the Balkans,<sup>6</sup> and even North Africa.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, Procopius devotes more pages to the war in Italy than he does to any other frontier. The textual reality is thus in stark contrast to the presumed historical reality. Even some of Procopius' numbers seem to support the argument for unimportance, for the small number of troops quoted in relation to the overall East Roman forces does suggest, at least if we take them at face value, that the importance of the campaign was minimized by Justinian.<sup>8</sup> Yet,

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<sup>1</sup> Given the later publication date of book 8, and the fact that it covers the ongoing wars in all theatres, as indicated by Procopius (*Wars*. 8.1.1-2), I have not included it in my discussion of the *Gothic Wars*, and instead, I shall treat it separately in the next chapter.

<sup>2</sup> I am ignoring the implications of pigeon-holing the work within one genre, even though, as we shall see, it is more problematic in this part of the *Wars* than elsewhere. See Marincola (1999) for the problems with genre and historiography.

<sup>3</sup> Kouroumalis 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Scott 1985.

<sup>5</sup> Greatrex (2005) provides a good synopsis of the east during the reign of Justinian. Cf. Kennedy (2000) for an overview of Mesopotamia, Palestine, and Syria in the sixth century, and above p. 125, n. 1.

<sup>6</sup> See now Sarantis (2005) for the Balkans during the reign of Justinian. Cf. Whitby 2000c.

<sup>7</sup> See Cameron 2000, esp. 559ff.

<sup>8</sup> See Hannestad (1960), Thompson (1982: 80), Cameron (1985: 148), Treadgold (1995: 61), Liebeschuetz (1996), Kouroumalis (2005: 225-226) and below pp. 268-281 for a discussion of the use of numbers in the *Gothic Wars*. There is a great discrepancy

Roman expeditionary armies in the sixth century were never overly large, as scholars have pointed out.<sup>9</sup> The army at its peak during the war in Italy, at least 20,000 strong, was not demonstrably smaller than the forces available for the preceding, and more often than not, concurrent wars in Africa, the Balkans, and the East. Indeed, while accepting that Justinian may have summoned Belisarius to Constantinople post Ravenna out of fear, the fact remains that he was widely regarded as the greatest Roman general for much of Justinian's reign; moreover, it is significant that he was commander-in-chief over the Roman forces in Italy on two separate occasions. Though only a few points, I feel that they are pertinent, and that they ultimately point to the importance of the Gothic War.<sup>10</sup> In this chapter, as with the previous two, I open by looking at issues pertaining to textual unity,<sup>11</sup> here the relationship between Procopius' comparison of Homeric and contemporary horse-archers in the preface and the combat described around Rome. I then turn to some other heroic traits of the battle described, before discussing his usage of numbers in the text, and its connection with the characterization of the respective armies. I close by looking at the models of generalship, again focusing primarily on Belisarius, though I also consider Vittigis and Totila.

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between Procopius' use of numbers for armies, for casualties, and for distances. Almost unfailingly Procopius will give a precise figure for a distance (accuracy is another question that I have no intention of addressing largely because I do not think that it is relevant for my discussion), even though in the same passage he may give a vague qualitative number ('many men' for example) for the troops. As an interesting contrast, Hornblower (1994a: 27) says that Thucydides is "less than precise about figures for distance". Cf. Morpeth (2006) for the qualitative and quantitative numbers deployed by Thucydides. I have adopted Morpeth's terminology as regards numbers. More on this below p. 276

<sup>9</sup> Whitby 1995; Rance 2005; Elton 2007a.

<sup>10</sup> As regards the silence of authors like Malalas and Evagrius, this can be explained through the consideration of the scope, focus, theme and overall character of their respective works. As regards Evagrius, for example, there were not many miracles that could figure in his work.

<sup>11</sup> In chapter three I looked at how the Ephthalite/Persian battle and Amida help guide our expectations for the later battles in the *Persian Wars*, while in chapter four I looked at the concomitant role that the Battle of Cape Bon had for our understanding of the nature of Belisarius' success in the *Vandal Wars*.

## Part I: Battle in the 'Belisariad'

### Horse-archery

I am going to open my analysis of the *Gothic Wars* by turning back to the preface. Within this is found the much debated comparison between contemporary horse-archers, and their Homeric forebears. For some the comparison is an example of Procopius failing to duplicate the historiographical practices perfected by Herodotus, and Thucydides;<sup>12</sup> some see it as a subtle criticism of Justinianic defence policy;<sup>13</sup> and yet others as a reflection of the historical reality.<sup>14</sup> I lean towards the last of the three theories, though even here I think that the argument can be developed further, for the reflection is a bit more nuanced than most have suspected. For Procopius the horse-archer was the soldier *par excellence*, and having discussed the issue sporadically to this point, he provides his decisive evidence for the theory in the most heroic of theatres of war, the *Gothic Wars*.<sup>15</sup> Besides bringing out the Homeric connection, this comparison also highlights Procopius' didacticism. Like Thucydides and Polybius before him, one of Procopius' aims is to provide useful exemplars and insights for future generals. In fact, I might go so far as to suggest that the structure of the *Wars*, much like the chapters on the various opponents of the empire found in

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<sup>12</sup> Cameron 1985: 36-38; Kouroumalis 2005: 25-33.

<sup>13</sup> Kaldellis 2004: 17-24; Kaldellis 2007b.

<sup>14</sup> Kaegi 1990: 69-72; Breccia 2004; Syväne 2004: 44-45; and Whitby 2005a: 360. Geoffrey Greatrex (pers. comm.) has suggested to me that the preface may represent Procopius' input in a wider societal debate on the efficacy of infantry versus cavalry. Indeed, a central debate in sixth century military thinking is the efficacy of infantry versus cavalry; this debate has been picked up by modern scholars. Greatrex, Elton, and Burgess (2005: 70-72) and Kaldellis (2007b) are right to draw attention to this issue. Although the effectiveness of cavalry and infantry in the sixth century has attracted considerable scholarly attention, contemporary (sixth century) reactions have not. One of the more perceptive discussions of the issue, though presented through a fictional debate between Modestus and Bessas, can be found in Robert Graves' (1954: 33-40) *Count Belisarius*. Note, especially, the speech of the young Belisarius (1954: 39-40). On the sixth century infantry see Rance (2005); on the cavalry Elton (2007b).

<sup>15</sup> Maurice opens his treatise, the *Strategikon*, with a discussion of the armament of the cavalryman, and much of that is devoted to archery. Cf. Maurice *Strat.* 1.2.17-18; 1.2.29-32.

Maurice's *Strategikon*,<sup>16</sup> is ordered in such a way as to provide three theatres with the tactics to use against a varied assortment of foes. This may not be the only, or even the most important, of Procopius' aims, but I think that it is one that needs to be considered. So, with this in mind, let us turn to Procopius' preface, and then see how Procopius develops this thesis.

Like scores of historians before him, Procopius includes many of the standard features for a preface. The comparison between archers, however, is a bit unusual.<sup>17</sup> In the section concerned with horse-archers Procopius makes some typical historiographical comments, such as that the greatest deeds have taken place in these particular wars,<sup>18</sup> and that they are greater than the deeds accomplished in any other known war.<sup>19</sup> It is then that Procopius turns to Homer and the archers: he alludes to those of his contemporaries who believe that greater wars were fought in antiquity.<sup>20</sup> Procopius needs to counter this, and begins his assault by denigrating the names used to identify ancient warriors.<sup>21</sup> He then refers to a quality which I discuss below, namely the *arete* of those ancient combatants: "...and they think that this *arete* has not at all come down to the present".<sup>22</sup> Much as the *Gothic Wars* represents the medium through which Procopius can make his case about the tactical superiority of the horse-archers, so too can he use it to argue that the Roman soldiers do indeed have this *arete* for which they are censured. Procopius then pulls out one of the definitive arguments for his case: his experience. He says that their opinion – about the lack of *arete* of modern soldiers – is, "based on a complete lack of experience

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<sup>16</sup> Maurice discusses the habits of the empire's various foes in book eleven.

<sup>17</sup> Both Herodotus and Thucydides discuss Homer (without necessarily naming him) in the introductions to their respective works, and Thucydides refutes the primacy of the events of the Trojan War. Cf. Hdt. 1.3-4; Thuc. 1.3-14.

<sup>18</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.1.6.

<sup>19</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.1.7.

<sup>20</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.1.7.

<sup>21</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.1.8.

<sup>22</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.1.8.

concerning these things”.<sup>23</sup> Procopius, of course, like Thucydides, Xenophon, and Polybius before him, had a world of experience in these matters, unlike his detractors, whether real or imagined;<sup>24</sup> he saw first hand the deadly force that these horse-archers wielded. The Homeric archers had no horses, shields, or spears, and Procopius jumps on these glaring faults;<sup>25</sup> what is more, they were not self-sufficient, and were instead reliant on the protection of their comrades, or whatever objects might be present, on the field of battle.<sup>26</sup> Procopius suggests that they lacked courage, and were wont to flee when things started to go awry.<sup>27</sup> Then, in a comment reminiscent – and surely not by coincidence – of Procopius’ later comparison of Roman and Persian archers in the *Persian Wars* at 1.18.32-34, he says: “Besides these things they used their skill with such indifference that, having brought their bowstring to their chest and launched their arrow, it was blunt and harmless to those that it hit”.<sup>28</sup> Having outlined the problems with ancient archers Procopius now turns to the contemporary ones:

Contemporary bowmen wear a breast plate in battle, and put on greaves that extend to their knees. Their arrows hang from the right side, while their sword hangs from the left. There are even some who have a spear fastened to themselves, and some who have a small shield on their shoulders, without a handle, of such a kind that cover their face and their neck. They ride horses as expertly as possible, and while moving at full speed, they can string their bow without any difficulty, and have such skill that they can shoot at others whether pursuing or fleeing their enemy. They draw their bowstrings right up to their face until it is nearly beside

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<sup>23</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.1.8.

<sup>24</sup> I think that the question of whether there were detractors, or this was simply a rhetorical exercise, is of no significance for my argument, or Procopius’ for that matter. The fact is he felt the need to make such an argument, which as noted, is fairly unique in the ancient historiographic corpus. It should be noted, however, that much of the tone of book 8 points towards the existence of hostile critics. See chapter 6 below p. 308, n. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.1.9.

<sup>26</sup> On the character of Homeric warfare see Van Wees (1988, 1994, 1997, 2004: 153-165), Lendon (2005: 20-38), Hunt (2007), Rawlings (2007: 19-42), and Wheeler (2007).

<sup>27</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.1.10-11. In his stimulating chapter on “Warfare in ancient literature: the paradox of war”, besides noting Procopius’ predilection for gore, Hornblower (2007: 40-42) discusses the variable views of archers in classical antiquity, especially concerning Greek (Athenian) archers.

<sup>28</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.1.11. Significantly, in this passage from the *Persian Wars* Procopius says that some of the soldiers, from both sides (Roman and Persian), “made noteworthy displays of deeds of valour/*arete*” (1.18.31). Although Procopius really pushes his argument in the *Gothic Wars*, he starts alerting his readers to this heroic character of contemporary combat from the beginning, that is, the *Persian Wars*.



their ear, so filling their arrow with such power that they always kill whomever falls in its path; and neither a shield, nor a breast plate alike, can in any way check its impetus.<sup>29</sup>

Besides hinting at a Homeric connection through the single-blow success of their shots, and subtly associating this Odysseus-like achievement with Belisarius, Procopius quite succinctly lays out the tactical strengths that have helped bring the Romans success.<sup>30</sup> In that passage the factors that Procopius feels mark out the Roman horse-archers are their corselets, their greaves, their additional weaponry, their shields, the skill with which they ride horses, and their mastery with the bow.<sup>31</sup> For Procopius, they are the ideal warriors. Yet, as we have seen in the two previous chapters, they play a very small role in Roman success. When faced with the equally formidable Persian horse-archers they have mixed success. Victories are interspersed with defeats. When the Romans do win, it is usually because of some other wing of the army, such as the infantry, rather than the mounted bowmen. Granted, Procopius does claim that they have a slight advantage over their Persian foes, but in none of the battles that he describes does Roman archery play a huge role. In the *Vandal Wars* we have yet another scenario. Ultimately, the Romans are successful, particularly against the Vandals.<sup>32</sup> Again the infantry plays an important role, but here, more so than against the Persians, so does the cavalry. This points towards the importance of horses for later Roman success. Still, the potential of the horse-archers has yet to be exploited. For that we need to turn to the *Gothic Wars*.<sup>33</sup> If there is any single tactical element that consistently contributes to Roman success in the *Persian Wars* and the *Vandal Wars* it is the competency of the actual

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<sup>29</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.1.12-15.

<sup>30</sup> Odysseus, of course, was an accomplished Bowman and, significantly, is the only one capable of stringing his bow. When he slaughters the suitors at the end of the *Odyssey* he demonstrates pin-point accuracy.

<sup>31</sup> For contemporary horse-archers see Grosse (1920: 314-315), Delbrück (1990: 346-347), Ravegnani (1988: 49-50), and Rance (2005: 428, 2007a: 355-357).

<sup>32</sup> The same cannot be said for the Moors, whom the Romans struggle against, particularly when they find themselves short of a capable commander.

<sup>33</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.3.23.

commander, particularly his ability to recognize and utilize the optimal tactical arrangement in a given combat situation. This applies to my discussion of horse-archers, as we shall now see when I take a closer look at the *Gothic Wars*.

The Roman forces first start taking advantage of their prowess with the bow during the siege of Rome. While penned in by Vittigis and the marauding Goths the Romans, and their local allies, fire from the walls at their foes to some success. Over the course of the siege from 5.22.4-23.12 Procopius reports a number of encounters in which Roman bows take down their Gothic targets. Given the Romans' defensive position on the parapets of Rome's fortifications, horses play no role in the exchanges. A few chapters later, however, the horse-archers make their debut, when Belisarius commands Trajan, and two hundred of his bodyguards, to head towards the enemy.<sup>34</sup> If the enemy turn to attack, they are not to engage them with their swords or spears, but their bows alone.<sup>35</sup> Unsurprisingly, the Goths do engage the Roman expeditionary force, and pursue them back to Rome's fortifications where they are met by the defensive weaponry at the city's fortifications. Procopius alleges that one thousand Goths perished in this encounter.<sup>36</sup> What is more, a few days later Belisarius sends out yet another expedition, this time with three hundred guardsmen under the leadership of Mundilas;<sup>37</sup> he does this a third time with another three hundred guardsmen after that, this time under Oilas.<sup>38</sup> All in all, four thousand Goths are alleged to have fallen in the three encounters. Thus, when first deployed the horse-archers are an unqualified success against the Goths. Vittigis is incensed at the Roman success and decides to send in his troops to "make a display" in front of the walls

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<sup>34</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.27.4.

<sup>35</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.27.5. Note Totila's comments to his troops at the Battle of Busta Gallorum in book 8 (8.32.6-8). Cf. Rance 2005: 465-469.

<sup>36</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.27.11.

<sup>37</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.27.11-12.

<sup>38</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.27.13.

of Rome.<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately for the sake of the Goths, their commander Vittigis, unlike our narrator Procopius, has failed to grasp the situation, that is the tactical advantage that the Romans now enjoy: “it did not dawn on him [Vittigis] that the armies differed as regards their arms and their respective practices in the ways of war”.<sup>40</sup> Belisarius, however, has, and he orders his troops to encircle the Gothic forces, and shoot at them from behind, a move clearly associated with horse archery. The Romans win the encounter, to the relative surprise of the residents of Rome. Quite a bit earlier, at 5.22.2, Belisarius had laughed at the first approach of the Goths, and the citizens of Rome had been shocked by what they had witnessed; hence their surprise. It is only now that the Roman general discloses his reasons for his seemingly nonchalant approach to combat in a passage that has tremendous bearing on the horse-archery tactical advantage; it is worth quoting in full:

And he himself said that while engaging them at the start with a few men he perceived what was different between both armies, namely that if he made an attack with a force commensurate with theirs, the mass of the enemy troops would not hand them a serious defeat because of the paucity of their [the Romans’] numbers. The difference was that nearly all the Romans, and their allies, the Huns, were excellent horse-archers, while none of the Goths, on the other hand, has practised this skill; their horsemen are accustomed to using spears and swords alone, while their archers are not mounted, and enter battle under the protection of the heavily-armed infantry. Thus the horsemen, lest the battle is at close-quarters, are not able to defend themselves against enemies who use the bow; and so they can be struck and killed without trouble, and their infantry are not powerful enough to make sallies against mounted men. Belisarius was convinced that it was because of this that the barbarians were defeated by the Romans in these battles. On the other hand, the Goths, who could still vividly remember the unexpected events which had transpired, no longer advanced on the fortifications of Rome with a few men, and did not pursue the enemy when they were being harassed, except so far as to keep them away from their palisaded camps.<sup>41</sup>

Generalship, again, is a key factor in the Romans’ success, as it has been throughout the *Wars*. And, had Belisarius not perceived the tactical advantages that he held over his opponents, things might have turned out as Vittigis and the

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<sup>39</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.27.16.

<sup>40</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.27.15.

<sup>41</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.27.26-29.

Goths had hoped. But, once Belisarius recognized the advantage, success now largely rested in the hands of the troops themselves.<sup>42</sup> And, as Procopius describes things, the Roman troops were indeed successful, owing to their tactical superiority, along with their deployment in operations that maximized their potential. Their success is both physical and psychological, as the Goths' fear suggests. Thus, once the narrative function of the siege of Rome is factored in, that is as the climax of the *Wars*,<sup>43</sup> and we consider the heroic qualities of the narrative of the *Gothic Wars* that I discuss below, it is hard not to conclude that it is here that Procopius is providing the evidence he needs for the tactical theory propounded in the preface: indeed, Procopius' theory would only have made sense in the context of a situation with sufficient heroic character to match that of the Trojan War and the *Iliad*.<sup>44</sup>

### **Graphic Battle Scenes, and the Single Blow**

One of the most striking features of Procopius' descriptions of battle in the *Gothic Wars* is the comparatively detailed – at least by the standards of Greek historiography – deaths and wounds that permeate the narrative, particularly those found in the context of the siege of Rome in 536/537.<sup>45</sup> Violence is not necessarily out of place in Greek historiography; as D'Huys has demonstrated,

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<sup>42</sup> See below pp. 293-306 for a detailed discussion of Belisarius' qualities as a general appropriate for a Homeric world view.

<sup>43</sup> One might conjecture that the victory at Ravenna marks the peak of Belisarius' success, particularly since it is followed up with Procopius' 'Thucydidean eulogy' of Belisarius. However, the action of the narrative is at its most intense during the siege of Rome, for the action tapers off at its conclusion.

<sup>44</sup> Not only do these soldiers, and their success, mark, respectively, the ideals and peak of the narrative, they also bring into greater focus the pathetic state that Belisarius and the East Romans find themselves in at a later stage in the text, particularly after the arrival of Totila. At 7.12.3, for example, in a letter from Belisarius to Justinian, the general says the following: "For while going round Thrace and Illyria continuously we collected soldiers who were altogether few in number, and pitiable, and who had only a few arms with them, and who were completely unpractised in battle".

<sup>45</sup> Interestingly, the later Byzantine historian John Kinnamos later adapted Procopius' descriptions in his discussions of twelfth century combat. Compare, for example, Procopius' description at 7.4.23-29 and 8.8.25-27 with Kinnamos' at 4.159-160.

violence was described as early as Herodotus.<sup>46</sup> There are more than a few violent scenes described in the *Wars*. The descriptions of battle in the *Persian Wars* are not particularly violent; the same is true for much of the *Vandal Wars*. What the battle scenes discussed thus far have lacked, with few exceptions,<sup>47</sup> is the gruesome detail that seems to abound in the *Gothic Wars*. Indeed, Shaw, while summarizing Procopius' descriptions of violence in the *Gothic Wars*, makes the following startling comments: "These [descriptions of the many encounters outside of the walls of Rome in 537] are extraordinary pieces of historical narration, striking because they are not, like most of Procopius' accounts of sieges and set battles, dependent on rhetorical devices and images adopted from earlier historians. Such realism in the description of combat is unusual."<sup>48</sup> Is Shaw right to suggest that these images did not come from earlier historians? Let us take a closer look.<sup>49</sup>

The first of the gruesome death scenes comes from the siege of Rome,<sup>50</sup> and the perpetrator of the deadly strike that Procopius describes is Belisarius:

When the Goths had come close to the ditch, the general [Belisarius], first of all stretched out his bow, then he fired and struck in the neck a certain one of the men in armour, who was leading the army. And, having been struck in a vital part of the body, he fell down onto his back, and all of the Roman people cried out with an extraordinary sound greater than any other, thinking that an excellent omen had happened to them.<sup>51</sup>

There are a few important features about this scene. Belisarius' first strike hits the mark; moreover, not only is it on target, but it manages to kill the man struck. In addition, Procopius also identifies the part of the body that received the deadly blow. These two features, that is the success with one blow, and the

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<sup>46</sup> D'Huys 1987.

<sup>47</sup> See chapter 4 above pp 214-216.

<sup>48</sup> Shaw 1999: 133. Lee (2005: 114) endorses the sentiments of Shaw. Cf. Kaegi (1990: 73-74).

<sup>49</sup> See now the comments of Hornblower (2007: 48-49), whom my work supports.

<sup>50</sup> On Procopius and the siege of Rome see Rubin (1957: 441-450), Evans (1972: 70-72), Beck (1986: 50-51), Adshead (1990: 93-104), and Brodka (2004: 87-93). For historical narrative of the events see Bury (1923: 180-195), Stein (1949: 347-355), Evans (1996b: 141-146), and Syväne (2004: 437-439), who curiously treats them as cavalry skirmishes so excluding them from his overview of sieges.

<sup>51</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.22.4-5.

identification of the wounded body part, are common throughout the skirmishes during the siege of Rome in the *Gothic Wars*. Despite this frequent usage there is considerable variety between the scenes, from the region of the body struck, to the source of the blow. A few lines later we find the following scene:

At the Salarian gate a tall Gothic man, a great warrior who was wearing a breast plate and a helmet on his head, and who was not unknown among the nation of the Goths, did not stay in the line with the others, but while standing beside a tree fired a number of shots at the battlements. But, a machine, which was on the tower on the left side, struck this man by some chance. The missile passed through the breast plate and hence, the body of the man, sinking more than halfway into the tree beside him, so binding the man to the spot where it sunk in, and suspending the corpse in place. When the Goths saw this, they became terrified, and moved out of missile range while staying in battle order, and they no longer harassed those at the wall.<sup>52</sup>

Here we find bows again hitting their mark, only in this particular instance the bow is powered by a machine, rather than an individual soldier. The victim is struck in a part of the body that Procopius identifies, much as he had earlier, and the blow is fatal. The Gothic man who is killed in this instance also happens to be a man of some importance, much like the one described above. These sorts of scenes, however, do not only involve Gothic soldiers. In book six we find more gruesome action scenes, only this time those hit are East Roman soldiers, and they manage to survive from their wounds:

In this encounter Koutilas, despite having been struck in the middle of the head by a javelin, still kept up the pursuit, all the while with a spear stuck in that place. At the setting of the sun, when it had become a rout, he rode into the city along with those others around him with the javelin, which was in his head shaking, a spectacle worthy of much repute. Also in this action Arzes, one of Belisarius' shield-bearers, was struck by a certain one of the Gothic archers between his nose and right eye. The point of the arrow went in all the way to the back of his neck; however, it could not be seen poking through, though the rest of the arrow came out from his face, and shook while the man rode. The Romans were blown away by the incredible sight of this man, in addition to that of Koutilas, particularly since they continued riding all the while paying no attention to the wounds that they had suffered.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.23.9-12.

<sup>53</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.2.14-18.

What first jumps out at the reader in this passage is the fact that the single blows are again successful, or at least, they hit their mark; but, they do not finish off their victims. There is, of course, a significant difference between these two men and the two men that I discussed above: they are Roman soldiers.<sup>54</sup> Procopius has created a marked contrast between the two, though a nuanced one: whereas single blows manage to take down Gothic soldiers when fired by Roman soldiers, or machines operated by Roman soldiers, the Roman soldiers themselves tend to survive the single shots fired from their Gothic counterparts. In fact, the passage noted above is not the only such passage where this happens, for there are others:

And at once they all struck him with their spears. His breast plate withstood the bulk of their blows and so he was not in overwhelming pain, but one of the Goths struck the youth from behind above the right armpit where his body happened to be exposed, and actually very close to his shoulder and upper arm; however, it was not a mortal blow, and it did not put him in danger of dying. But, another Goth hit him in front thus piercing his left thigh and cutting the muscle, though on an angle. When Valerian and Martin saw what was happening, they came to his aid as fast as they could, and having turned back the enemy, both of them grabbed the bridle of Bochas' horse and went to the city.<sup>55</sup>

Again, there are a number of similarities between the two passages involving Roman victims, and they are not unique. In this case Procopius is more specific about the location of the wound, which suggests that he may have some knowledge of human anatomy, or perhaps medicine.<sup>56</sup> Here too the Roman soldier survives; after receiving a number of blows that might otherwise have

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<sup>54</sup> For a limited discussion of the characterization of the armies see below pp 281-292.

<sup>55</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.2.22-24.

<sup>56</sup> In fact, after this very episode Procopius includes a lengthy digression on the treatment that Bochas received. If nothing else, Procopius was a very inquisitive historian. He was also, seemingly, very knowledgeable. Contra Howard-Johnston (2000), I do not think that he was an engineer, though he may very well have been a man of science, at least of some sort. The passage in question is found at 6.2.25-36. See too the battle scene at 6.5.24-26, where Procopius intervenes in the narrative to postulate why the shaft of a missile fell to the ground after a Roman, named Trajan, was struck in the face, even though the iron tip was no longer visible. Procopius says: "It seems to me that the reason is that the iron tip was not fixed with certainty to the shaft." The intervention is not specifically concerned with medicine, though it is directly related to the injury, and it is in many respects a peculiar comment. It is quite possible that in some sense Procopius is alluding to Herodotus, for he too demonstrated an interest in medicine (Thomas 2000: 29-42).

been fatal. Despite the anatomical detail these descriptions lack blood.<sup>57</sup> Horrific though their injuries may be, and having a weapon protruding from one's body would be just that, the gory details are restricted to individuals for we do not find the heaps of corpses, and pools of blood, which we find in the works of historians such as Polybius.<sup>58</sup> The exception, an extended passage in which we do find the flowing of blood, concerns an individual, and not the battlefield at large; it is reminiscent of the single combat involving Andreas in the Battle of Dara.<sup>59</sup>

So both horses raced towards each other, and when they were quite close, the combatants hurled their spears, and since Artabazes got his shot off first, he had the advantage and struck Valaris on the right side of his rib cage. The barbarian, having been struck in a vital spot, was about to fall backwards to the earth, but his spear was fixed in place by a rock in the ground behind him, and so he could not fall. But Artabazes pressed on and thrust the spear further into the man's body; for, he did not know that his shot had struck home, and in a vital spot no less. Thus, it happened that while Valaris was nearly upright the iron tip of his spear became fixed to the breast plate of Artabazes, and moving little by little it passed right through his corselet, and sliced through Artabazes' skin and reached all the way to his neck. By some chance, as the iron tip went through him, it cut his wind-pipe, and immediately there was a great stream of blood. Yet, he did not feel any pain, but he himself rode his horse back to the Roman army, while Valaris fell there dead. And Artabazes' bleeding did not stop, and three days later he was taken from the world of men...<sup>60</sup>

This single combat is more detailed than those from the Battle of Dara between Andreas and the two Persian soldiers. Although Procopius does specify the parts of the body struck,<sup>61</sup> the opponents do not fall from one blow, and instead need to be finished off once they have been knocked off their horses. In the second skirmish, between Andreas and the older Persian soldier, both combatants fall off their horses, and it is in the ensuing scramble for weapons, aided by Andreas' speed, that the Roman prevails.<sup>62</sup> This single combat from the *Gothic Wars*, then, is in keeping with the pattern that prevails throughout this part of the text.

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<sup>57</sup> On blood in Homer see Neal (2006).

<sup>58</sup> See the descriptions which Polybius provides at 15.14.1-2 and 16.35.9-10. cf. D'Huys 1987: 224-231.

<sup>59</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.13.29ff.

<sup>60</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.4.23-29.

<sup>61</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.13.31.

<sup>62</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.13.37.



One blow is enough to finish off the Goth, though in this lone instance it is at the expense of the Roman soldier; his death comes days later. What is unique is the description of the flow of blood. The obvious explanation is that it is the loss of blood that killed Artabazes, and as with all graphic battle scenes described in the *Gothic Wars*, Procopius is careful to identify the causes of death, which are, invariably, single blows to vital regions of the body.

This catalogue of anatomically precise battle wounds is unusual in the corpus of Greek historiography, a point recently highlighted by Hornblower.<sup>63</sup> Some of the scenes from Diodorus are similar, particularly his description of the death of Epaminondas.<sup>64</sup> Appian does refer to body parts while describing the horrors of the siege of Carthage during the Second Punic War, but not in the context of combat itself.<sup>65</sup> Appian's near contemporary Arrian does on one occasion report the sort of scene we find in Procopius,<sup>66</sup> the same is true for Ammianus Marcellinus, who admittedly wrote in Latin, but was a Greek.<sup>67</sup> Given my discussion of *hippotoxotai*, it should not surprise that the inspiration for the gruesome detail is Homer.<sup>68</sup> Wounds of that sort abound in Homer, and epic poetry in general.<sup>69</sup> His near contemporary Corippus describes similar scenes in the Latin epic *Iohannis*.<sup>70</sup> Quintus of Smyrna and Nonnos include the same sorts of descriptions.<sup>71</sup> Over the course of this chapter more examples of Homeric influence will surface.

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<sup>63</sup> Hornblower 2007: 48-49.

<sup>64</sup> At 15.87.1 Diodorus writes: "But while struggling heroically for the victory, he [Epaminondas] received a mortal wound in the chest. As the spear broke and the iron point was left in his body, he fell of a sudden, his strength sapped by the wound" (trans. Sherman).

<sup>65</sup> App. *Pun.* 118.

<sup>66</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 6.10.

<sup>67</sup> Amm. Marc. 19.1.7.

<sup>68</sup> Strasburger 1972.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Hom. *Il.* 11.420-427.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Corippus *Iohannis* 5.104-113.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Quint. Smyrn. 8.310-323; Nonnos *Dion.* 22.320-330.

## Single Combat<sup>72</sup>

In the chapter focused on the *Persian Wars*, I looked at, if briefly, the single combat involving the bath attendant Andreas, particularly its function as a narrative device. This matter has, however, been touched on before in relation to Procopius. In his insightful cultural history of battle in antiquity, *Soldiers and Ghosts*, Ted Lendon mentions Procopius ever so briefly: he is noted in the epilogue, and, he lists examples of ‘single combat by challenge’, ‘single combat in the course of wider combat’, and ‘heroic leadership in general’ from the *Wars*.<sup>73</sup> The latter I shall save for part three, which is focused on generalship. Here I want to look at those examples of single combat from the *Gothic Wars* identified by Lendon. Not only is single combat relevant to Lendon’s book, particularly his emphasis on this looking to the past that pervaded the Greek and Roman views on war, and Homer in particular, but it is relevant to some of the issues discussed in this chapter, especially regarding the intellectual connection with the Homeric archers from the preface highlighted above.

The first thing I must do is determine whether those cases identified by Lendon really do refer to actual instances of *monomachia*.<sup>74</sup> Lendon identified one example of ‘single combat by challenge’, which comes at 7.4.21-30;<sup>75</sup> and, he identified three examples of ‘single combat in the course of wider combat’ at

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<sup>72</sup> Some of these issues were raised in a paper given by Doug Lee entitled “Heroic emulation and warfare in late antiquity”, given at the one-day conference ‘Discourses of War in the Roman World from Julius Caesar to Heraclius’, held at the University of Warwick on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008. His paper elaborated on some of the brief comments about Procopius made by Ted Lendon in his book *Soldiers and Ghosts*.

<sup>73</sup> Lendon 2005: 385, n. 32.

<sup>74</sup> Rance (2005: 429) also touches on single combat in Procopius, and composes a separate list of single combats (2005: 429, n. 16), though he does not go into much detail. Gat (2005: 290), in his expansive study of the history of war, discusses single combat only in passing without making any judgements on whether it is representative of primitive warfare or otherwise. Trombley (2002: 246-247), on the other hand, touches on similar issues, though more in the context of the late sixth and early seventh centuries. The topic is an interesting one that I hope to come back to and discuss in greater detail in the future. For some comparative material from earlier Greek and Roman history see Glück (1964), Harris (1979: 38-39), Oakley (1985), and Van Wees (2004: 133-134).

<sup>75</sup> Lendon 2005: 385, n. 32.

5.29.20-21, 6.1.20, and 6.1.23.<sup>76</sup> I discussed the first example, at 7.4.21-30, above, because of the amount of attention Procopius plays to the wounds themselves, and there is no need to go over some of those points here; suffice to say, it is a clear-cut example of single combat, and the level of detail hints at a Homeric connection.<sup>77</sup> What of the others, the cases of ‘single combat in the course of wider combat’? Can we identify them as cases of single combat? The first is at 5.29-20-21 and Procopius says:

In this struggle the bravery of three Roman men stood out above all the others, Athenodoros, an Isaurian man, noteworthy among the spearmen of Belisarius, and Theodoriskos and Georgios, spearmen of Martin, born Cappadocian. For having continually gone out in front of the phalanx they killed many of the barbarians.

Although this passage provides good evidence of heroic actions, it does not necessarily describe single combat. The first part of the passage, “in this struggle [ἐν τούτῳ τῷ πόνῳ]”, makes it clear that these events, about to be described, take place in the course of an actual battle.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, on closer inspection Procopius’ language is quite vague, and it is hard to imagine how single combats could actually take place in the midst of the melee, though they may have gone out in front to hurl a spear/arrow. At present, it is best to classify them as examples of heroic action. The second comes at 6.1.20, and here, though the events are not detailed, Procopius actually uses the term single combat: “Afterwards not many horsemen on both sides armed themselves as if for battle a number of times, and the contests always ended in single combat [ἄς μονομαχίαν] with the Romans victorious in all of them.” The last example, at 6.1.23, comes only a few lines later, and Procopius describes it in more detail:

Chorsamantis, a noteworthy fellow among the spearmen of Belisarius, born a Massagete, with a few men chased after 70 enemy fighters. When he came well out into the plain, the other Romans rode off back, and so Chorsamantis continued to pursue them alone. But when the Goths

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<sup>76</sup> Lendon 2005: 385, n. 32.

<sup>77</sup> Note, for example, the vivid detail in Homer’s description of the single combat at *Il.* 11.420-427.

<sup>78</sup> This point was, of course, noted by Lendon.

caught sight of him, they turned their horses around and went after him. He went forward into their midst, and having killed one of their best men with his spear, he went at the others, who turned again and hurried off in flight. Being ashamed by those in their camp – for they suspected that the others had perceived them – they wanted to go against him again. But, they suffered this same thing, just like before, with one of their best men falling, and turned in flight no less...<sup>79</sup>

As with the first example, labelling this case single combat is incorrect; rather, it is an individual act of bravado, if not rashness. Still, it is significant for other reasons. Now that I noted the four Lendon examples, let us look at their significance.

In keeping with the Homeric theme, the shame felt by the Goths fleeing from Chorsamantis stands out because of its relation to glory. For the Homeric hero, glory and honour, and their opposite, shame, necessitate the recognition of others. The actions of the Goths are shameful less for what they are, than for the fact that they were probably recognized by the men; at the same time, Chorsamantis achieves glory because he charges into the fray alone, even though he had set off in pursuit in the company of others. Those with him know what he is doing, or at least can imagine it. Thus, when he returns (as he later does), his reputation, and so glory, will be all the greater, particularly in relation to his fleeing comrades. The first instance of single combat noted, involving the Goth Valaris, takes place, as a proper single combat should, in front of the two armies in no-man's land; the presence of an audience is also significant. Indeed, this need for a witness is all the more striking in the case of the victorious Artabazes,<sup>80</sup> who, alone of the Romans, was unafraid to accept the Goth's challenge. His exceptional martial display is even more pronounced when Procopius focalizes the soldiers' reaction to his later death.<sup>81</sup> Like the other two so-called cases of 'single combat in the course of wider combat', this particular instance comes from the siege of Rome, the most Homeric part of the *Gothic*

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<sup>79</sup> Despite the listing at 6.1.23, the passage quoted actually runs from 6.1.21-26.

<sup>80</sup> Victorious yes, though it was a pyrrhic victory.

<sup>81</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.4.29.

*Wars*; the fact that they are found in the presence of a description with Homeric character is significant. These four examples highlight the fact that the extent of one's glory, or shame, is very much dependant on how this matches up with one's comrades; this seems to be consistent whether the case is a genuine example of single combat or otherwise.

### **Arete<sup>82</sup> and Heroic Displays**

In section three below I shall discuss some examples of heroism pertaining to leadership. Here I want to discuss *arete* and heroic displays more generally, particularly as regards their association with Homeric heroes. By and large, when a battle is treated summarily, Procopius often claims that "a display of heroic deeds" is the determining factor. This is interesting in and of itself; however, I shall be focusing on some more detailed cases.

*Arete* is a common virtue in the *Iliad*; the same is true for *andreia* (masculinity), or some cognate; it is also found in Thucydides.<sup>83</sup> At the same time, scholars have noted Procopius' emphasis on virtue or *arete*,<sup>84</sup> but the

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<sup>82</sup> Adkins (1997: 706) defines *arete* in Homer as: "courage-and-physical-prowess-and-social-position-and-fame. It denotes and commends all these qualities together because of the general needs of Homeric society that all should be united in certain individuals. The man of *arete* is the *agathos*, who necessarily possesses a great many goods and qualities; and he has *time*, which in some way denotes and commends his position in life." These qualities abound in the character of Belisarius, as I note below pp. 302-307.

<sup>83</sup> During the course of the Sicilian debate, and more specifically Nicias' speech against an expedition to Sicily, Nicias says that the Spartans value *arete* most (Thuc. 6.11.6). Considering the context, there can be little doubt that it is the Spartans' military prowess that is being referred to. This is not surprising given this episode's Homeric character. Diodorus too referred to *arete* in military contexts. See, for example, 11.7.2, in which Diodorus, while describing the Battle of Thermopylae, says that the battle was a remarkable one because of the *arete* of the barbarians. In the next line we find that despite the Persians' *arete*, the Greeks surpassed them in this quality (11.7.2). cf. Mackie (1996) and Allison (1997) on the heroic character of Thucydides' Sicilian expedition.

<sup>84</sup> Kaldellis (2004: 189-204), for example, in chapter 5, which is entitled 'God and *Tyche* in the *Wars*', devotes several pages to the relationship between virtue and *tyche* in the *Gothic Wars*. Stewart's (pers. comm.) insightful work on masculinity in the *Wars* also bears on this matter, though he too overlooks a possible Homeric connection. I want to thank Mike Stewart for sharing his work with me.

possible Homeric connection has been overlooked.<sup>85</sup> Perhaps we should not be surprised. Given the rest of the discussion in this chapter, this seems to be another heroic link. Before making any such suggestions, however, we must discern the preponderance of *arete* and *andreia* in the *Gothic Wars*, two traits that I think are related, and so worth discussing in tandem.<sup>86</sup>

*Arete* and masculinity first surface in the historical introduction that opens the *Gothic Wars*. Over the course of the introduction Procopius' narrative naturally turns to Amalasantha and Atalaric. One of the most important characteristics for Gothic leaders, at least for Procopius, is their martial, and by proxy, their masculine character.<sup>87</sup> Thus, it is no surprise to learn that Amalasantha was a good ruler because of her masculine character.<sup>88</sup> A little later, in the context of her assassination, Procopius comments on her *arete*.<sup>89</sup> At the same time, Atalaric presents a bit of a problem, as the leading Goths try and seek out, "one who will spur him on in the prime of life to bloom at the same time in the *arete* which is the barbarian custom".<sup>90</sup> Here Procopius openly equates *arete* with the barbarians, and the narrative leaves little doubt that it is recognized as a martial quality. The Goths are being characterized – as they frequently are in modern literature<sup>91</sup> – as a martial, and heroic, people. From the beginning,

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<sup>85</sup> See Long (1970), Adkins (1971), and Graziosi and Haubold (2003) for Homeric masculinity and the values expressed, such as *arete*, in the Homeric epics, especially the *Illiad*.

<sup>86</sup> Although the emphasis will of course be on battles, I shall also look at some examples of *arete* and *andreia* in the surrounding narrative, insofar as they are related to this discussion here.

<sup>87</sup> Procopius associates martial prowess with masculinity indirectly in a reference to Theodohad: "But Theodohad was making the least number of preparations for war, being also by nature unmanly" (5.9.1). For more on Procopius' characterization of the Gothic high command see below pp 293-301. On the connection between martial prowess and masculinity in the fourth and fifth centuries, and its later subversion by Christians, see Kuefler (2001: 37-49, 105-124) though almost entirely from a Western standpoint, and his interpretation is not without its problems.

<sup>88</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.2.3.

<sup>89</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.4.29.

<sup>90</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.2.17.

<sup>91</sup> The modern literature is immense on the character of the Goths. See, for example, Wolfram (1988: 290-306), Heather (1996), Liebeschuetz (1996), Amory (1997), Wolfram

then, the Romans find the odds stacked in their opponent's favour, and so any success would be no small achievement.<sup>92</sup>

The first time that the Romans are said to possess *arete* comes during the siege of Naples when we learn that some of those assaulting the wall, who were killed as a result, possessed *arete*.<sup>93</sup> During that same siege we find Belisarius remarking on his troops' *arete* in an exhortation designed to assuage their anger and so prevent the sacking of the city.<sup>94</sup> His troops are not the only ones who possess this *arete*, for Belisarius has this too, or so Stephanus in reference to a certain Asclepiodotus in the course of a speech.<sup>95</sup> To this point *arete* has been discussed only in the context of descriptions of military action or people. When the scene shifts to Vittigis, who is not at the siege and has only just become leader of the Goths, they, that is the Goths, have not lost their manliness, for in an exhortation to his troops he refers to this quality.<sup>96</sup> It is also worth noting that in that speech Vittigis says that *arete* is revealed only at the conclusion of one's actions, and not at the beginning.<sup>97</sup> This speech comes as Vittigis is preparing to enter war, and so again there can be little doubt that *arete* for Procopius is a martial quality. Indeed, in many respects Procopius is marking out *arete* as the quality by which the opposing sides should be measured, and to a certain extent the developing war is shaping up to be a test of this specific quality.

The siege of Rome is filled with references to *arete*; moreover, here we find that it is more than a word used to describe a warrior: it is a trait that can bring about success in battle. At 5.16.6, at the end of a skirmish between the Romans and the Goths, we find the former successful because of their *arete*. In

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(1997: 51-122), Kulikowski (2002, 2007), Halsall (2003: 20-39), Goffart (2006, especially 187-229), and Halsall (2007: 118-136, 482-498).

<sup>92</sup> This is, of course, hardly a new observation, though I think that the heroic character has been overlooked.

<sup>93</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.8.43.

<sup>94</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.10.33.

<sup>95</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.10.42.

<sup>96</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.11.20.

<sup>97</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.11.21.

a later skirmish some of Belisarius' spearmen and guardsmen, who manage to save his life and so prevent the loss of the Roman cause, make "displays of *arrete* of such a kind that has, I think, not been demonstrated by a human to this day".<sup>98</sup> As with the previous encounter, the Romans win because of their *arete*.<sup>99</sup> Immediately following, another bout of fighting breaks out, and yet another Roman soldier, a certain Valentinos, makes a display of *arete*.<sup>100</sup> Several lines later Vittigis and the Goths finally attempt to match the success of the Romans and, "he ordered them to make a display of deeds worthy of *arete* against the enemy".<sup>101</sup> However, this desperate attempt fails, and it is becoming clear that the Romans' *arete* is superior to that of their foes. There is another skirmish and as the Roman men draw up for battle, Procopius can speak with authority when he claims that they had lined up with *arete*.<sup>102</sup> A little later some Romans make a further display of *arete*.<sup>103</sup> With Belisarius in firm command it is clear that the East Romans have greater *arete* than the Goths. And, the *arete* now applies not only to those in the presence of Belisarius, but also to other Roman soldiers in the field. For John, in a speech to his troops at Ariminum, tells them that if they have *arete* their chance to show it is now, on the field of battle;<sup>104</sup> we are reminded of Vittigis' pronouncements about *arete* being demonstrated through actions. The next place in the narrative that we find Belisarius is following the siege of Rome at the siege of Auximus. Here his troops continue to make displays of *arete*, and continue to have success.<sup>105</sup> Vittigis is again in a precarious position, and so in a letter to the defenders at Auximus he reminds

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<sup>98</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.18.12. By placing their virtue on a pedestal Procopius is also probably consciously referring to the Homeric warriors discussed in the preface.

<sup>99</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.18.16.

<sup>100</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.18.18.

<sup>101</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.27.21.

<sup>102</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.28.9.

<sup>103</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.29.39.

<sup>104</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.12.20.

<sup>105</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.23.19.



them that they were specifically selected because of their *arete*, and he appeals to their masculinity:

You must bear in mind what falls in your way manfully, and carefully, out of necessity, and keep in mind that it was because of your *arete* that you were selected from the lot to garrison Auximus; and, you would be tarnishing the reputation which all the Goths have about you, and for which you were put forward as a bulwark for Ravenna, and as the guarantors of their own security.<sup>106</sup>

As it turns out, the Romans emerge from these encounters victorious. It is the Romans who have the greater masculinity and *arete*.

The references to *arete* and masculinity begin to trail off with the departure of Belisarius at the end of book six and the beginning of book seven. It starts to play a smaller role in the battles that are described, though they too are fewer in number. Indeed, with Belisarius absent, this element is less of a factor in the respective battles' outcomes. Furthermore, I would stress that the narrative as a whole seems to lose its heroic/Homeric quality shortly after the end of the first siege of Rome. Like so much else in the *Wars*, *arete* seems to be tied to Belisarius, which in turn, points to a link with Homer for his general.

## **Part II: Characterization, Numbers, and Rhetoric in the *Belisariad***

### **Numbers and Rhetoric**

In previous chapters I looked at Procopius' use of numbers, focusing on precision, regularity, and selectivity. As with the *Persian Wars* and the *Vandal Wars*, these issues are important for understanding the *Gothic Wars*. Nevertheless, here I want to move beyond mere identification of these features, and several others, and focus on how they contribute to Procopius' characterizations of the Gothic and Roman armies. In addition, I shall analyse these figures in their broader context, namely, in relation to the figures deployed in the *Gothic Wars* outside of descriptions of battle; by doing this their

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<sup>106</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.26.13. As with my discussion of single combat we find that honour or shame ultimately rest in the mind of one's companions.

significance is revealed. Despite their seeming simplicity, numbers can convey to us quite a bit about Procopius' narrative techniques beyond the type of sources he used, or *Quellenforschung*. Another significant, and, as we shall see, related issue that I shall discuss is identity, namely that of the two primary players in the events, the Gothic and Roman armies,<sup>107</sup> as well as those of the secondary armies mentioned (Franks for example); this too bears on our understanding of Procopius' presentation of battle in the *Gothic Wars*.

Above I noted that Procopius uses more precise figures in the *Persian Wars* than in the *Vandal Wars*. This matter, as regards the *Gothic Wars*, has been discussed before, notably by Hannestad,<sup>108</sup> though also by Thompson,<sup>109</sup> and Cameron.<sup>110</sup> There are a number of conclusions drawn by those scholars. They have observed a change in Procopius' presentation in the second half of the *Gothic Wars*, when the numbers become much more precise. They have also suggested that Procopius tended to exaggerate the number of enemy, especially Gothic, forces, particularly at the onset of the war; and, that he inflated these Gothic numbers for the sake of glorifying Belisarius.<sup>111</sup> Are these conclusions valid? Before discussing characterization, I need to discuss them.

Much ink has been spilled on the inaccuracy of the numbers reported by historians throughout antiquity; this is not the place to discuss this any further. As I noted in my introduction, my aim in this thesis is not to discuss the accuracy of the data presented by Procopius;<sup>112</sup> moreover, accuracy and precision are not synonymous, though they are certainly related. Where a reported figure of 1,000

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<sup>107</sup> I shall treat the characterization of individuals, such as Belisarius, Vitigis, and Totila, separately. As a comparison, for the characterization of the armies in Tacitus' *Historiae* see Ash (1999).

<sup>108</sup> Hannestad 1960.

<sup>109</sup> Thompson 1982: 77-91.

<sup>110</sup> Cameron 1985: 147-150. Liebeschuetz (1996: 232) essentially follows Hannestad, and, states that "Procopius' numbers are incomplete and in part certainly unreliable".

<sup>111</sup> Evans (1972: 143, n. 82) was one of the first to raise doubts about this second conclusion. Cf. Evans 1972: 74.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. appendix 1 below pp. 343-346 for a few comments on rhetoric and reality in the *Wars*.

for a troop total may be said to be accurate if there really were, in any historical sense, 1,000 troops involved in the situation in question, the expression of “1,000 troops” is more precise than “no less than 1,000 troops” in that situation, regardless of how accurate the 1,000 figure is, because the former is exact, while the latter is not. Moving on to precision in Procopius, in general, just as we saw in the *Persian Wars* and the *Vandal Wars*, the numbers used for people, whether troops or casualties, tend to be round figures. As with the rest of the *Wars*, numbers for troops are given in multiples of ten. So, we read phrases like: “having selected 300 men from an infantry division”,<sup>113</sup> “no less than 1,000 Goths fell”,<sup>114</sup> “he sent 600 horsemen”,<sup>115</sup> “around 2,000 men from the Herulian nation followed him”,<sup>116</sup> and “no more than 1,000 men following him”.<sup>117</sup> We also see that Procopius still uses expressions like “about”, “around”, “no more than”, and “no less than”, which were discussed in earlier chapters. Though only a sample, these examples are applicable to the rest of the text. Generally, when numbers are reported, they tend to be less than precise, particularly as regards troop totals, whether it is for casualties, or units deployed for a particular assignment. Indeed, a significant conclusion of Hannestad’s study, which, as noted, was followed by later scholars, was that Procopius becomes more precise in the latter half of the *Gothic Wars*.

Despite the seeming unanimity of this verdict, the precision of the numbers that Procopius offers continues to draw attention from scholars.<sup>118</sup> The only figures that show any real signs of precision, however, are those given by Procopius for distances, which tend to come outside of the descriptions of battle.

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<sup>113</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.14.1.

<sup>114</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.18.14.

<sup>115</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.2.9.

<sup>116</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.13.18.

<sup>117</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.1.27.

<sup>118</sup> Treadgold (2007: 213-226), for example, in his recent overview of early Byzantine historiography, discusses this issue in his chapter on Procopius in a section subtitled ‘the Achievement of Procopius’.

A glance at his use of stades bears this out.<sup>119</sup> The precision of the distances Procopius uses has been discussed in an interesting article by Feissel, who looked at Roman miles, stades, or days' journey in the *Wars*, the *Buildings*, and the *Secret History*.<sup>120</sup> Feissel, in fact, suggests that one of Procopius' requirements regarding distance was to give exact information, in other words, precise information.<sup>121</sup> At the same time, he did not always meet this condition, in large part, or so Feissel, because he was averse to using the mile.<sup>122</sup> Much like troop numbers, when Procopius reports stades he often seems to round the figures to the nearest multiple of ten; at the same time, he also puts them into multiples of seven.<sup>123</sup> Much as he does with the troops figures, however, Procopius resorts to including modifiers before distances such as "no less than", "about", and "more than". Early in book five we find that the length of the River Decennovium is 113 stades.<sup>124</sup> A little later we read that "Cumae is on the sea, 128 stades from Naples".<sup>125</sup> With that said, we still get some familiar expressions: "and when he came near to Rome, and no more than 14 stades from it".<sup>126</sup> In fact, as we move through the *Gothic Wars*, we find the figures used for distances given increasingly in factors of ten, that is becoming less precise. At 6.47 we find: "the fortress of Tibur, which is 140 stades from Rome";<sup>127</sup> a little later we find: "a certain church of the apostle Paul 14 stades from the walls of Rome".<sup>128</sup> At the end of book 7 we find "it extended for 1,000 stades";<sup>129</sup> "as many as 60 stades away";<sup>130</sup> and "which is 700 stades from Croton".<sup>131</sup> Still,

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<sup>119</sup> Stades are reported much more often than either days' journey, or miles in the *Gothic Wars*, as noted by Feissel (2002: 386-388).

<sup>120</sup> Feissel 2002

<sup>121</sup> Feissel 2002: 383.

<sup>122</sup> Feissel 2002: 383, 397-399

<sup>123</sup> Feissel 2002: 393-397.

<sup>124</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.11.2.

<sup>125</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.14.3.

<sup>126</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.17.3.

<sup>127</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.4.7.

<sup>128</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.4.9.

<sup>129</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.28.2.

<sup>130</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.28.8.

there is a significant degree of precision in the distances that Procopius presents us with; as we saw, this seems to be at odds with his figures for troops numbers.

As things stand, the conclusion of Hannestad is breaking down, at least as regards distances. But what about troop numbers? Treadgold has recently argued in favour of the precision of Procopius' use of numbers.<sup>132</sup> Though he recognizes that the quality of the figures used varies,<sup>133</sup> he does express approval at the quantity of 'statistics' used, as well as their general reliability. As regards precision, one of the only places where he finds fault with Procopius is in the *Secret History*.<sup>134</sup> In an attempt to solve this problem, I have compiled a near complete list (as far as I can tell) of the troop numbers reported by Procopius in the *Gothic Wars*. The list, which can be found in appendix 3, includes only those instances where a figure is given.<sup>135</sup>

If we look at the troop numbers from this list alone, we find that there are many more figures given for book seven than there are for books five and six. This is due, in no small part, to the fact that the siege of Rome, the centrepiece of the narrative, starts in book five and continues through book six: it happens to be full of skirmishes filled with indeterminable numbers. What is more, we get less of the fantastical figures in book seven; so, the only two numbers reported in the 'myriad' range come from a speech made by Totila. Indeed, if we were to equate quantity with precision, then we should agree with Hannestad, and others, that the last phase is certainly more precise; but, as I have said, precision means exactness, and the number of times a figure is reported has no bearing on its exactness. What is probably the best marker of precision is the presence, or absence, of expressions such as "about", "around", "more than", "no more than", "less than", and "no less than". A cursory glance suggests that they are fairly

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<sup>131</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.28.18.

<sup>132</sup> Treadgold 2007: 210; 218-221.

<sup>133</sup> Treadgold 2007: 218.

<sup>134</sup> Treadgold 2007: 210. Cf. Procop. *SH* 18.4.

<sup>135</sup> The list is found in appendix 3 on pp. 349-353 below.

evenly distributed throughout books five through seven. When we tabulate the figures that I have collected, however, the results are surprising. There are 30 figures from the list that are from book five, 33 from book six, and 52 from book seven. Of those, in book five Procopius uses a relative and imprecise phrase like 'around' 27% of the time; in book six he uses such a phrase 30% of the time; and in book seven, 23% of the time. Based on this criterion, Procopius seems to get less precise as he moves towards the centre of the *Gothic Wars*, before becoming more precise as he moves in to book seven, which has a much greater total number of figures. With that said, book seven also has many more pages than the previous two books: 184 in the Loeb edition. As a point of comparison, book 5 takes up 141 Loeb pages, and book 6 140 pages.<sup>136</sup> If we stick with the division into halves that Hannestad originally advocated, and so divide those page totals into two sections, the mid point of the *Gothic Wars* comes at 6.26. With this new information in mind, the new tallies are 60 figures for the first half, with the use of an imprecise qualifier 28% of the time; and, 55 figures for the second half, with the use of an imprecise qualifier 24% of the time. Suddenly Hannestad and the others are vindicated, but only by the slimmest of margins, though again it should be pointed out that the siege of Rome, which is the longest description, falls in the first half. The conclusions of those previous scholars, then, need modification. What we should really say is that Procopius is slightly more precise in the second half of the *Gothic Wars*, though he also uses a slightly fewer figures. Yet, we can take this discussion a little further.

One other criterion for measuring precision is the number of adjectives used to replace figures; an adjective is certainly vaguer than the use of an actual

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<sup>136</sup> These totals include partial pages (such as the end of a book where the last piece of text may only take up a quarter of the page). The Loeb version was used because it was the most convenient at the time that I first typed this. As a point of contrast, book 5 takes up 142 pages in the Teubner, book 6 143 pages, and book 7 185 pages, totals which are quite comparable to the Loeb, and so point to its reliability, at least as far as this tally is concerned.

number. Thus, let us quickly look at a few examples. A typical one is found at 5.7.1, when Procopius says: “the Goths, who were being led by Asinaris and Gripas among others, had come to Dalmatia with a great army [στρατὸν πολλόν]”. Instances where Procopius describes an army, or division, in this manner in the *Gothic Wars* abound; the same holds true for when he describes the number of casualties following an engagement. So, at 6.23.35 we read: “the soldiers, while looking down on the enemy in the field, went against them on the run, so killing some of them [τινάς τε ἀπέτανον] in the first rush”. Indeed, this is much as we found when we looked at the *Persian Wars* and the *Vandal Wars*.<sup>137</sup> What is important for us, however, is their distribution; if we accept the conclusions reached by Hannestad and others about the increase in precision in the second half of the text, with the low-mark being around the siege of Rome, then we should expect to find more general descriptors in the first half of the *Gothic Wars*. A close examination reveals, however, that this is not the case. I went through all of those instances where Procopius uses adjectives when discussing a troop contingent, whether he is referring to its size, or its casualty totals. As we would expect given the respective lengths of books five and six, the totals are roughly the same. The number of places where adjectives are used in book seven is greater, ostensibly unsurprising given that the seventh book is longer than the previous two. With that said, book seven is only about 30% longer than book five, and about 31% longer than book six, while adjectives are used 65% more often in book seven than book five, and 60% more often than book six. If we do for adjectives what we did for numbers, that is, divide the *Gothic Wars* into halves, and then compare the totals, the results are striking, at least if we want to accept the theory that there is an increase in precision in the second half: my tentative total for the first half includes 101 cases, while my total for the second half contains 102 cases. At the end of these analyses for numbers and for

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<sup>137</sup> See above pp. 133-137, 196-203.

adjectives, then, we should now cast aside any belief that the second half of the text is significantly more precise than the first.

With the first conclusion dispensed with, we need to look closer at the second conclusion, namely that Procopius exaggerated the Gothic forces, to test whether it is as plausible as it at first seems. There are many more figures given for Roman troops than there are for Gothic ones. This should not surprise as Procopius had no qualms about focusing on the Roman side of the war. This fact is also reflected in the greater variety of troop types given for the Roman forces, but more on this, and other matters of characterization, in a moment.<sup>138</sup> In the list that I have compiled above Procopius refers to Gothic forces 33 times.<sup>139</sup> Of those 33 figures, only three (which are repeated) seem to be wild exaggerations, and of these, two are variations on each other. The two related figures are totals given for the Gothic forces at Rome, which are first quoted at 150,000, but later 200,000.<sup>140</sup> The other figure is for the casualties after a skirmish in the early stages of the siege of Rome, listed as 30,000.<sup>141</sup> Both sets seem to be out of order, the former especially when we consider the scholarly consensus as regards the size of campaigning armies in the sixth century.<sup>142</sup> If we ignore the size of the number of troops killed and instead focus on the proportion of troops killed from the total, the figure is a bit more believable: one fifth of the Gothic forces perished in that one encounter. Thus, does Procopius really want us to accept these gross figures, or is there something that we are missing? The

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<sup>138</sup> See Müller (1912) and Grosse (1920: 272-296) on how the divisions of the Roman army are categorized by Procopius, and more recently Ravegnani (1988: 29-39) and Rance (2005: 444-447).

<sup>139</sup> My list, of course, also includes some civilian totals, though this does not affect my argument.

<sup>140</sup> 150,000 – Procop. *Wars* 5.16.11, 5.24.2; 200,000 – Procop. *Wars* 7.4.12, 7.21.4.

<sup>141</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.23.26.

<sup>142</sup> Treadgold (2007: 220) speculates that the figure of 200,000 might be appropriate for the size of the total Ostrogothic population. As regards the size of late Roman expeditionary forces see Rance (2005: 447-449). Cf. Treadgold 1995: 59-64; Whitby 1995: 73-75; Whitby 2000a: 292-293; Syväne 2004: 79-91; and Elton 2007a: 284-286.



solution becomes manifest when we turn to a topic that I have not yet discussed, namely cultural perception.<sup>143</sup>

In a provocative, though not unproblematic, study on “the numbers ‘found’ in Thucydides...and their explication”,<sup>144</sup> Morpeth focuses on two contexts that are of particular relevance here, and that are worth quoting in full:

(ii) cultural perceptions and reckonings of abnormally or exceptionally large forces – with specific reference to massed formations, expeditions, or expeditionary forces of barbarians or outsiders ad Hellenes... (iii) the dramatic impact and literary power of the deployment of the term, *μυριάδες* in Thucydides’ work and, for that matter, Herodotus’ Histories [sic]<sup>145</sup>

The perception of large forces, and any totals for that matter, by both the sixth century audience, and the characters in the text itself, and, the dramatic effect of using such large numbers, are two issues worth considering when we find such figures in Procopius. In fact, if we begin with the perception of the characters themselves, the validity of this approach is made apparent. At 5.7.28-29, in the early stages of Belisarius’ invasion of Italy, Procopius describes the following: “men happened to be there whom Gripas [a Gothic commander] had sent as spies. And when they caught sight of the ships and camp of Konstantianos, it seemed to them that the sea and the whole land were full of soldiers; they went back to Gripas, figuring that Konstantianos was bringing no less than tens of thousands of men [*μυριάδας ἀνδρῶν οὐκ ὀλιγας*]”.<sup>146</sup> This report is a gross exaggeration, for even though Procopius does not tell us the exact number of troops Konstantianos had at his disposal,<sup>147</sup> a few lines later he does note that Konstantianos dispatched 500 men to seize the pass near Salones and deemed it sufficient. These events take place before Vittigis assumes control of the

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<sup>143</sup> Cf. the comments of Halsall (2003: 144).

<sup>144</sup> Morpeth 2006: 64. Morpeth’s (2006) book raises some interesting issues though his language and argumentation are often difficult to follow.

<sup>145</sup> Morpeth 2006: 67

<sup>146</sup> On a similar note, see Procop. *Wars* 8.16.8-9, where the Persian force is exaggerated in an attempt to frighten King Gubazes. Cf. Treadgold 2007: 220.

<sup>147</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.7.28: “with his whole force” [τῷ παντὶ στόλῳ].

Gothic forces. Theodohad is still in charge, and the fear among the Goths is palpable, and growing, thanks to his ineffectual leadership.<sup>148</sup> This vague report of myriads of soldiers for the enemy, ‘the other’ (here the Romans), then, is a great way for Procopius to heighten the tension (i.e., dramatic effect).

Furthermore, it advances the narrative by increasing the collective fear of the Goths, here manifested by Gripas, and by highlighting the failure in leadership that would eventually lead to Theodohad’s replacement by Vittigis.<sup>149</sup> With this in mind, let us look at the other presentations of myriads.

The first use of myriad, and, in regard to a specific number at that, comes when Procopius tells us the size of the Gothic force that Vittigis leads to Rome, namely “cavalry and infantry numbering no less than 150,000”.<sup>150</sup> A few chapters earlier we learned that Vittigis had “gathered all the Goths from all over”,<sup>151</sup> and although Procopius had not yet (nor does he ever) give the total Gothic population, this statement acts as a qualifier, implanting in the mind of the reader the idea that we are to expect a significant force at the king’s disposal (all the Goths, and myriads of them); unsurprisingly, 150,000 is exactly that, and more.<sup>152</sup> This fantastic Gothic total is also all the more remarkable when we bear in mind that Belisarius has only 5,000 men to defend Rome.<sup>153</sup> Indeed, this is one of the main reasons why Procopius is alleged to have exaggerated the Gothic numbers: to flatter Belisarius. I discuss some of the epic characteristics of the siege of

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<sup>148</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.7.11.

<sup>149</sup> Indeed, throughout the *Gothic Wars* we get a procession of different Gothic leaders, with each successive one, setting aside Theoderic that is, more effective, and more positively presented, than the former (Theodohad to Vittigis to Totila).

<sup>150</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.16.11.

<sup>151</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.11.28.

<sup>152</sup> This total is used at only one further point in the text at 5.24.2 when it is directly contrasted with the Roman total (5,000 versus 150,000). Significantly, however, the context is a letter written by Belisarius to Justinian in which he pleads for more troops. It is not hard to imagine that Justinian, or any other emperor for that matter, would be more willing to send extra troops with the knowledge that his army was up against an incredible host. Indeed, in Justinian’s, as well as Belisarius’, eyes, the figure of 150,000 may have been more plausible (as we shall soon see) than one that we might feel is more applicable, such as 50,000, the total postulated by Treadgold (2007: 220).

<sup>153</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.22.17.

Rome, such as the graphic wounds, and the importance of *arete* above,<sup>154</sup> and so using an exaggerated figure like this in this context is perhaps not surprising: this is certainly the most logical place for Procopius to do it. A number this size, even if inaccurate, conveys to the reader the scale of the encounter, particularly when contrasted with the size of the Roman force; the amount of detail used, and the length of the narrative of the siege itself, both strengthen this impression.<sup>155</sup> When the Gothic forces at the siege of Rome are referred to again, this comes much later in the text, and the totals are focalized through Totila, in both cases by means of speeches.<sup>156</sup> In the second of the two instances Totila contrasts the now numerically inferior Gothic forces with their Roman opposites, and so emphasizes the peril in which they find themselves, much as Belisarius did in his letter to Justinian. The position of the two groups has reversed, and, one might suggest, a Gothic victory would be almost as remarkable an achievement as Belisarius' at Rome. Indeed, to highlight the difference, both between the Romans and Goths, but also between the Goths then and the Goths now, Totila exaggerates further giving a figure of 200,000, rather than the 150,000 reported by Procopius under Vittigis. Plus, when Totila refers to the size of the Roman forces he also exaggerates claiming that it was made up of 7,000 men.<sup>157</sup> In this latter situation, when Totila is in charge and the Goths have been reduced to 5,000 men, the Romans now outnumber their foes: at one point, following Totila's accession, the Romans number 12,000;<sup>158</sup> at another, in the same speech in which Totila claims that 200,000 Goths were defeated by 7,000 Greeks, he says that his small force has defeated a Roman counterpart

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<sup>154</sup> See pp. 255-268.

<sup>155</sup> Cf. Morpeth 2006: 70.

<sup>156</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.21.4: "earlier we had collected 200,000 of the most warlike soldiers...we were defeated at the hands of 7,000 Greek men".

<sup>157</sup> The figures from the speech are found at 7.21.4. There is an earlier reference to the size of the Gothic force, and it is again in a speech given by Totila (7.4.12), only here, he lists the 200,000, and says that the Gothic army was reduced to 5,000.

<sup>158</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.3.4.

numbering “more than 20,000 men”.<sup>159</sup> Scale figures here too, just as it did with the 150,000 Goths at Rome. The reversal in fortunes between the two groups, Goths and Romans, is significant, as is the victory here of the Goths over the Romans following Belisarius’ departure. It is the Romans that are the extreme ‘other’ with numbers in the myriad range. Figures reported in the myriad range, then, seem to play an important part in the development of the narrative, both for what they indicate about the scale of the respective endeavour, and, as I have started to show, what they reveal about the respective armies involved, and their position in the text. There are two further points: in many instances it is the difference in size between two forces that stands out; they are often presented in some discourse (letter, speech), and so, for those on the receiving end of the communication the scale of the number involved is clearly important in conveying the size of the challenge (in Belisarius’ case), or the scale of the reversal (in Totila’s case).

There are a few other examples of number inflation in the myriad range. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the issues of discourse and perception, and scale, resurface. At 6.20.21 we learn that “in Picenum it is said that among the Roman farmers no less than 50,000 people died from diseases”; at 6.21.39 we read that the number killed at Milan numbered “no less than 300,000”. Of those examples, the former pertains to discourse and perception, the latter to scale.<sup>160</sup> The first troop contingent concerns the number of soldiers that the Franks had gathered for their army, which is 100,000.<sup>161</sup> It is quite possible that this figure is an exaggeration,<sup>162</sup> though it is certainly much lower than the second example. It concerns the number of German forces (that is Frankish), only here the total is

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<sup>159</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.21.5.

<sup>160</sup> The same can probably be said about the former case, the 50,000 who perished from disease in Picenum.

<sup>161</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.23.5. On Procopius’ and Agathias’ characterization of the military capabilities of the Franks see Bachrach (1970). Cf. Halsall 2003: 40-70, 2007: 399-405.

<sup>162</sup> On the size of Western Medieval armies see Halsall (2003: 119-133). On a similar note, see Goffart (1980: 231-234) on Vandal Africa.

500,000, a fivefold increase. This figure is reported midway through book six,<sup>163</sup> and, quite significantly, the information is conveyed to Vittigis by Frankish envoys. Thus, we have the same scenario that we did for Belisarius and Justinian, and Totila and the Goths. It is unlikely that Procopius' audience, or the character, and historical personage, of Vittigis would have known the size of the Frankish army, and given the perilous situation (the Goths were on the ropes at this point), it seems quite plausible in the context of the narrative that the envoys would have used such an incredible figure.<sup>164</sup> Yet again, some variation on myriad is used to convey the scale of the situation, and, it hinges on perception,<sup>165</sup> is presented through some sort of discourse, and involves an 'other'.

There also seem to be a number of references to concerns about the size of respective forces, particularly in relation to one's own force. Much seems to hang on the perception of the size of the opponent's force, and this is evident from the beginning. We find a situation where it is reported that "they [the wounded Goths] maintained that Belisarius would be present with an army of a size beyond reckoning".<sup>166</sup> Indeed, one of the most common adjectives used by Procopius when describing the size of an army is something along the lines of 'worthy of note'; so we find phrases like '*stratian axiologotaten*', '*axiomachon*', '*ouk axiologon*'. To a certain degree, we should not be surprised to find such references, on occasion, to armies of this sort, for one of Procopius' expressed aims was to prove to his audience that his story was of the greatest war ever known, and certainly such a story would include armies described in this manner.

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<sup>163</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.28.10.

<sup>164</sup> On military intelligence in late antiquity see Lee (1993). For the earlier Roman period see Austin and Rankov (1995).

<sup>165</sup> We get a good example of the role of perception in the presentation of the size of the enemy forces in a speech that Belisarius makes to his commanders before his move to Ravenna: "Thus let each one of you remember that Vittigis has many myriads of Goths in Ravenna" (6.18.19).

<sup>166</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.28.10.

Ignoring, for a moment, the variety of figures and adjectives employed, it is worth noting that Procopius often refers to the importance of numbers in battle, whether small or large.<sup>167</sup> And, it seems to pick up as the narrative progresses. I have not highlighted all the places where he notes it, but generals seem to be constantly referring to the size of their army in relation to their foe. In some ways this seems to be reminiscent of both ancient and modern discussions of the importance of numbers in late Roman, or East Roman, armies, which often found themselves at a numerical disadvantage.<sup>168</sup> This sort of information found its way into tactical manuals, of which the most relevant for my purposes is the *Strategikon* of Maurice. With that said, it seems that in the *Gothic Wars* the regularity of this problem, the discrepancy in numbers, seems to be balanced between Roman and Gothic forces. So, it might simply be that Procopius is trying to draw our attention to the numbers used because of their significance in his narrative: the more fantastic the numbers involved, and the differences between them, the more spectacular the story. One final point about the number discrepancy, at least as regards the Romans: as I have noted, one issue that Procopius is keen to emphasize is the tactical superiority of certain segments of the Roman army, especially the mounted archers. I stressed that this point was first highlighted in the preface, and then argued for, by Procopius, primarily in the *Gothic Wars*. One obvious way to strengthen his argument was to not only present Roman forces, using mounted archers, fighting successfully against their Gothic opponents, but also to present them as victorious against opposition that was numerically superior. We have, then, another case of intratextuality in the

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<sup>167</sup> Conceivably, this could be more significant than it at first seems to be. Where an army lacks the numbers needed to match their foes, they must resort to other means if they want to be successful.

<sup>168</sup> See, for example the comments of Maurice (*Strat.* 8.2.8.21-22, 8.2.38) and Nikephoros Phocas (*On Skirmishing* 6). Cf. Kaegi 1983; Kaegi 1990: 64-66; Treadgold 1995: 206-219; Whittow 1996: 175-193; Haldon 1999: 67-106.

narrative, despite the seeming unimportance of the numbers aside from the perspective of reconstructing the war.

### **Characterization and Rhetoric**

Besides marking out the scale of the encounter, these uses of myriad highlight the relative barbarity of the force in question. A key feature of Classical Greek, especially Athenian, identity was the polarity between Greeks and barbarians.<sup>169</sup> In some respects, much of what they were based on was who they were not: barbarians, and more specifically, Persians.<sup>170</sup> This point became particularly marked following the success of the united Greek force at holding off the invasion of Xerxes, described in detail by Herodotus. Over a thousand years later the circumstances have changed, but, the dichotomy still exists, with the Romans now occupying one end of the polarity, barbarians the other. On a related note, in the chapters on the *Persian Wars* and the *Vandal Wars* above I commented on the usual presence of two principal commanders in battle, one for each side. This pattern holds for the *Gothic Wars*,<sup>171</sup> and it has a bearing on the following discussion. These grandiose figures, the myriads, are usually reserved for the most barbaric of forces in the *Gothic Wars*, a practice consistent with earlier Greek historical writing and reinforced through Procopius' diction, especially through his various uses of the word 'barbarian'.<sup>172</sup> Furthermore, not only does the use of the word 'barbarian' have a bearing on the use of 'myriad',

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<sup>169</sup> See Champion (2004: 30-63) and Kaldellis (2007a: 14-30).

<sup>170</sup> This was, of course, not felt universally; moreover, the barbarian need not be Persian, as they could just as easily be a Macedonian. The key distinction was non-Greek. It was largely contingent on the context; despite Alexander's claims in the fourth century BC, mainland Greeks were arguably just as likely to view the Macedonians as barbarian as the Persians whose land he was invading. The few times that the Persians are mentioned in the *Gothic Wars*, they are called either Persians (6.13.17), or Medes (5.5.3), and never barbarians, a possible indication of how Procopius viewed the status of Rome's main eastern rival.

<sup>171</sup> Indeed, in her dissertation Kouroumali (2005: 219-224) commented on the presence of pairs of figures in the *Gothic Wars*.

<sup>172</sup> Herodotus (7.184), Thucydides (2.98), and Arrian (2.8.5-8), for example, all adopt the same practice at some point or other in their respective historical works.

but, these terms collectively are also connected to Procopius' characterization of the principal generals, and to his conception of generalship.<sup>173</sup>

One of the earliest figures reported for the Goths is the grossly exaggerated 150,000 troops alleged to have been present at the siege of Rome. When Procopius opens the *Gothic Wars* he begins with his introductory history of Italy, and to a lesser degree, its Gothic rulers. They are explicitly called barbarians, and put in apposition to the Romans.<sup>174</sup> Indeed, even Theoderic, who is generally characterized favourably, is called a Goth, and said to have maintained this distinction when he assumed control of Italy: "and he did not claim the right to take on the manner of the emperor of the Romans, or the name, but was even called *rex* throughout his life (for thus the barbarians are used to calling their leaders)".<sup>175</sup> Italy has come to be ruled by barbarian Goths; in modern eyes, they have many of the features that we associate with barbarian, Gothic, and Germanic peoples, and notably for our purposes, the values associated with their reputed warrior aristocracies. Amalasantha is urged by Gothic nobles to allow her son be raised with the *arete* that is the barbarian custom.<sup>176</sup> In their eyes, this is what is expected, particularly in light of the values of Theoderic, and his subsequent success.<sup>177</sup> However, at the same time, we are presented with a dichotomy, and a potentially divisive one, within the Goths themselves: the

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<sup>173</sup> Only a few books in to the *Gothic Wars* Procopius stresses the importance of commanders: "the Romans withdrew to their base, since they were altogether left without a commander" (5.7.9).

<sup>174</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.1.4. Procopius goes into more detail about the origins of the Goths early in the *Vandal Wars*. We read: "While Honorius was holding power over the West, barbarians took his land; I shall talk about these people, and in what manner they did this... There were many Gothic nations earlier just as there are now, and the greatest and most noteworthy of all the Goths are the Vandals, Visigoths, and Gepids" (3.2.1-3.2.2). He also notes the brutality of the barbarians/Goths at 3.2.9-13.

<sup>175</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.1.26. As an aside, at this early stage in the text Procopius is also making a distinction between Romans, such as himself, and Italians, the inhabitants of Italy, Goths aside, at the end of the fifth century and start of the sixth. A little later he does this between the Goths and their Italian subjects (5.6.19).

<sup>176</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.2.17.

<sup>177</sup> Cf. Procop. *Wars* 5.2.15.



'civilizing' tendencies of their leaders such as Amalasantha,<sup>178</sup> and the 'traditional' tendencies of the later ruler Totila.<sup>179</sup> There is another important point about the term "barbarian" that Procopius raises early on, and it pertains to its fluidity. Although the Goths are generally barbarians, the degree to which they exhibit barbarian tendencies varies with time and actions; moreover, barbarians are not necessarily Goths in the context of the *Gothic Wars*, for Roman soldiers too can be barbarians. For example, when Procopius gives us his catalogue of Roman forces at 5.5.1ff., he notes that the commander Mundus "was born a barbarian, though he was especially loyal to the affairs of the emperor and brave in war".<sup>180</sup> A little later, in the context of a conversation with Stephanus during the siege of Naples, Belisarius says: "especially while in command of Romans who are accompanying me...but especially as there are a great number of barbarians in my encampment".<sup>181</sup> From the introduction we can see that the Goths can be barbarians, and, that barbarian is a fluid term, and one that is not fixed to any particular person or group; this conception of the word is developed, and further explicated, over the course of the *Gothic Wars*.

The fluidity of the term barbarian becomes particularly marked when the Goths, often termed barbarians, are placed along side other peoples, such as those who make up a part of their army; furthermore, this bears out the similarity

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<sup>178</sup> Not only is Procopius presenting us with this dichotomy among the Gothic leadership, but also between men and women. Indeed, he is presenting a very Iliadic conception of war, where the women are generally averse to fighting, manifested here in Amalasantha's educational plans for her son (Procop. *Wars* 5.9.1). This marked difference between the martial qualities and roles of men and women is consistent with what we know about so-called barbarians and ancient martial societies, including Greece and Rome. In keeping with Homer's and Herodotus' allusions to the prominent role that women have had as the causes of major wars in their respective eras, Procopius does so too, by having Amalasantha contact Justinian and persuade him to attack Italy. On the role of women in warfare in various ancient and early medieval societies see Halsall (2003: 32-36), Van Wees (2004: 37-40), Gat (2005: 77-86), Hornblower (2007: 42-47), Lee (2007a: 141-146) and Southern (2007: 144-145).

<sup>179</sup> This is a point to which we shall return later, particularly when we come to Totila.

<sup>180</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.5.2.

<sup>181</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.9.27.

in meaning of the term 'Goth' with the composite term 'Roman'.<sup>182</sup> At 5.16.9 we find Vittigis ordering Asinarius and Uligisalus "to collect an army from the barbarians of the land of Suevi there, and then to go straightaway to Dalmatia and Salones".<sup>183</sup> In this reckoning, "Goth", at least as regards the army, is more of a collective term, much as "Roman" is. On a similar note, at 5.29.20, Procopius gives us this interesting phrase:

In this struggle three men from the Romans were conspicuous among all the others, Athenodoros, an Isaurian man, and one of good repute among the spearmen of Belisarius, and, Theodoriskos and Georgios, spearmen of Martinos, born Cappadocian. For, they were always going out in front of the phalanx and killing many of the barbarians with their spears.<sup>184</sup>

What these two passages suggest is that in some respects, Goth and Roman are both collective, and inclusive, terms. Indeed, one might even go so far as to suggest these two words are, in some sense, cognates, or at the very least, on the same side of parallel polarities, one Roman/barbarian, the other Goth/barbarian. A good example of the relativity of the terms barbarian and Goth come much later in a speech made by a certain Paul, who is discussing both the Germans (Franks) and the Goths. In it, he calls Goths "Goths", but the Germans "barbarians", thus making a strong distinction between the two.<sup>185</sup> Another quite striking example comes when Procopius describes the incident in the hole at

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<sup>182</sup> In his provocative new book Kaldellis (2007a) questions the designation of the Byzantine Empire as a multicultural commonwealth, preferring the term nation state, where distinctions, such as Cilicia are more akin to terms like "mid-westerner" for an American. At least as regards Procopius – and more generally the sixth century, a period Kaldellis passes over – the language is ambiguous; as such, I think that the case can still be made that he presents an East Roman Empire, rather than nation state. Cf. Herrin 2007: 242-251.

<sup>183</sup> Cf. Procop. *Wars* 5.16.12: "Thus Asinarius, having come to Suevia, collected an army of barbarians; on the other hand Uligisalus alone led the Goths to Liburnia". The Gothic army was in fact quite heterogeneous, as Procopius' text suggests (6.11.1). Among modern scholars, there are differing views of the heterogeneity of the Gothic army, with some seeing it as polyethnic, others as only so when the situation necessitated it, and others as generally only composed of ethnic Goths. See Wolfram (1988: 300-302), Heather (1996: 242-248, 327-328), Amory (1997 passim, especially 277-313), Geary (1999: 110-123), Kulikowski (2002), Syv anne (2004: 372), Goffart (2006: 187-229), Kouroumali (2005: 164-175), and Halsall (2007: 328-338).

<sup>184</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.29.20-21. I discuss some other issues arising from this passage above p. 262.

<sup>185</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.21.6. The Germans number in the hundreds of myriads at this point, while the Goths do not.

6.1.11-20. Here we find two soldiers, one Goth, the other Roman, who both, on different occasions, fall down the same hole such that they end up trapped together, with the Roman soldier ultimately dependent on the good faith of the Gothic soldier and his comrades. The Gothic soldier is called just that, with one exception;<sup>186</sup> this episode stresses the similarity of the two forces, and again, the fluidity of their respective group names. Indeed, there is even one example in which a Roman could be a Goth: “Thus they sent an embassy to Rome, the third man [from the embassy] was an esteemed Roman man among the Goths, who, having come before Belisarius, said the following”.<sup>187</sup> We find Procopius making a similar connection between Goth and Roman at 7.2.1ff., which suggests, as I have noted, that the term Goth often refers to a group, and not any specific nation:

There was a certain Erarichos in the army of Goths, a Rogos by birth, a man invested with great power among these barbarians. These Rogoi are a Gothic nation, though in the past they were autonomous. In the beginning they, along with these other nations, had allied with Theoderic, and this separate nation came to the Goths and acted entirely with them against the enemy.<sup>188</sup>

This passage has striking similarities to the aforementioned passage at 5.29.20; in fact, the two passages read as mirror images of each other. In the Roman

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<sup>186</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.1.13.

<sup>187</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.6.3. This exchange is one of the more interesting ones from the *Gothic Wars*, at least as regards identity. The envoys are constantly making a distinction between Goths (that is who they are) and Romans (the invaders); barbarians are mentioned, but as a distinct third group, when the envoys address Belisarius: “But you, being men such as this, did not lay claim to Italy while it was suffering at the hands of Odoacer and the barbarians” (6.6.21). At the end of this discussion we get a series of quick replies from both sides – the only instance, to my recollection, of a dialogue involving direct discourse among characters in the *Wars* – in which Procopius, the narrator, when referring to who is speaking calls the Goths barbarians (for example, 6.6.27), but Belisarius, as a speaker, calls the Goths by their name (6.6.28). Throughout, when Procopius uses a word for embassy or ambassadors, he uses Goth or Goths.

In some cases the choice of word, particularly as regards the usage of the word barbarian, seems to hinge on the status of the person, or persons, in question: “For he [John] was daring and especially self-sufficient amongst this group, untiring in dangerous situations, and in his way of life he had a certain austerity and continuing ability to endure hardship that was in no way inferior to that of any barbarian or soldier” (6.10.10). One might even suggest that here barbarian is being used in the same sense as Goth is by Joshua the Stylite, that is, as a type of soldier, and presumably, a non-Roman soldier.

<sup>188</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.2.1-2. On the Rogoi (Rugians) see Goffart (2006: 110-114).

version the Cappadocian and Isaurian soldiers have the same position in the army as the Rogos soldier here in the Gothic army. The similarity between the two forces is stressed much later in the *Gothic Wars* when Totila is king. In a speech at 7.25.4-24 to his disgruntled soldiers, many of the points noted by Totila evoke points made at other times by Belisarius in similar situations of his own.<sup>189</sup> By the time of the great reversal,<sup>190</sup> the Goths have taken the Roman position in the narrative almost effortlessly, a transformation which underscores the similarity between the terms 'Goth' and 'Roman'.

While bearing in mind the fluidity of the term barbarian, we should also bear in mind that neither it, nor the term Goth, have any moral dimension. For Procopius, Goth is not a pejorative term, nor, necessarily, is barbarian. In noting Justinian's decision to send the Romans to war in Italy Procopius says: "he [Justinian] ordered Belisarius to go to Italy as quickly as possible, and, to treat the Goths as if they are enemies".<sup>191</sup> Before the siege of Naples, Belisarius alludes to the fact that the Gothic soldiers could move between both groups, Goths and Romans: "We give to these Goths present a choice: either to array themselves with the rest of us under the great emperor, or, to go home altogether without suffering wrong".<sup>192</sup> The Goths were in the wrong not because they were Goths, but because, at least as regards the political stage, they were foes.<sup>193</sup> Indeed, some of the principal Roman commanders are themselves Goths, such as Bessus.<sup>194</sup> We also read of one of Belisarius' spearmen, a certain Chorsamantis, who suffers a major injury and is thus prevented from contributing in battle;

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<sup>189</sup> Indeed, the whole reason for the speech itself, namely the questions surrounding the leadership of the Goths after some minor setbacks, is reminiscent of similar speeches made by Belisarius to both his fellow soldiers, and the people of Rome.

<sup>190</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.25.14.

<sup>191</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.7.26.

<sup>192</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.8.16.

<sup>193</sup> Cf. Procop. *Wars* 5.8.27, where Belisarius calls their leadership "barbarian tyranny", where barbarian is the type of tyranny, and so not the negative part of the title. In a different context "Roman tyranny" would essentially mean the same thing, only those in control would be different. Again, no morality is implied.

<sup>194</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.16.2.

Procopius tells us that his barbarian background leads to inevitable dismay because of his inability to fight.<sup>195</sup> This reading of Procopius' understanding of barbarians is a bit more nuanced than, and in stark contrast to, that of Cameron.<sup>196</sup> A similar point was made recently by Kaldellis, in regard to the views of Eratosthenes of Cyrene, and to a lesser degree, Strabo: "that good and bad people are distributed among different ethnic or cultural groups".<sup>197</sup> With that said, as regards both terms, barbarian and Goth, it is barbarian that has more negative connotations than Goth. Having described the massacre at Milan, Procopius says the following: "The barbarians did not treat them [the Roman soldiers] with disgrace, and held them under guard with Mundilas; on the other hand, they razed the city to the ground and killed all the men from youth upwards, which totalled no less than 300,000".<sup>198</sup> Here the actions of the Goths are certainly atrocious; in addition, it is probably no coincidence that they are called barbarians and not Goths. But, Procopius is not making any moral judgements here about the Goths necessarily. By saying barbarians the word Goth is absolved of specifically negative connotations. He does note that the Roman soldiers were treated well,<sup>199</sup> and a few lines later he calls them Goths again.<sup>200</sup> In the subsequent chapter he calls the Goths barbarians and the term loses its moral designation: "And among these [suggestions] this point was considered, namely that the emperor of the Romans had never before been strong enough to wage war against the barbarians in the west, except when treaties were established with Persia. For at that time they had destroyed the Vandals and the

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<sup>195</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.1.21.

<sup>196</sup> Cameron 1985: 239-240.

<sup>197</sup> Kaldellis 2007a: 25.

<sup>198</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.21.39.

<sup>199</sup> This is an interesting, and perhaps significant point, for we rarely, if ever, read of soldiers treating any enemy soldier poorly at the conclusion of a battle, or after taking a city – that is excluding, of course, the actual act of killing each other – in the *Gothic Wars*.

<sup>200</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.21.42.

Moors, and at present, were battling the Goths”.<sup>201</sup> When Totila starts to feature in the narrative, the likelihood of a negative connotation for ‘Goth’ is even more improbable. For, we read statements such as: “When Totila captured Naples, he made a display of humanity to those captured that conspicuously fits neither an enemy nor barbarian man”,<sup>202</sup> and, “While Totila was doing these things, the commanders of the Roman army, along with the soldiers, were plundering the property of their subjects”.<sup>203</sup> Indeed, in the latter example, it is the Romans who are behaving like brigands.<sup>204</sup>

The connection between barbarity and myriad is borne out when the Franks enter the stage. Indeed, in the excursus on their background, they are painted as even more barbaric than the Goths, a further indication of the relativity of the term barbarian.<sup>205</sup> At this stage of the narrative, the size of the Frankish force willing to enter the fray is listed at 100,000,<sup>206</sup> a figure which now vastly outnumbers the constantly shrinking Gothic army, despite the earlier assumption of Belisarius, who believes that the Goths still numbered in the 10s of 1000s.<sup>207</sup> This figure of 100,000 grows fivefold when it becomes a matter of perception, and a tool of rhetoric, and not simply a figure reported in the text.<sup>208</sup> The ambassadors from the Frankish kingdom make a concerted effort to turn the Goths to their side; they even appeal to the similarity in ethnicity, relatively speaking, between the two peoples.<sup>209</sup> The use of the figure 500,000 is significant in its context for two reasons: they, that is, the ambassadors, tell the

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<sup>201</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.22.15.

<sup>202</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.8.1. Unlike the previous example, Procopius alludes to a negative definition of barbarian.

<sup>203</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.9.1.

<sup>204</sup> Incidentally, what we see here is another case where the outcome (here behaviour) depends heavily on the leadership of the respective commander, particularly with respect to the treatment of civilians. For a more detailed discussion of this topic see Pazdernik (1997, 2000).

<sup>205</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.25.9-11.

<sup>206</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.25.2.

<sup>207</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.18.19.

<sup>208</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.28.10.

<sup>209</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.28.14.

Goths that their numerically superior force would crush the Romans; simultaneously, they are implying that they would, and could, do the same to the Goths.<sup>210</sup> Here, then, myriad is used to convey fear (dramatic effect), as the exaggeration of the size of their army in this speech is meant to intimidate. Indeed, they even mark themselves as “the most warlike of men”, another means of heightening the tension through increasing the Gothic fear.<sup>211</sup> The envoys call both nations, Franks and Goths, barbarians: “In short, the nation of the Romans has become mistrustful to the barbarians, since by nature it is an enemy”. But, the use of such a large number puts the Franks much further on the relative scale of barbarity than the Goths; after all, the Frankish appeal to a collective barbarity is denied by the Goths, who end up siding with the Romans. The Goths now are relatively few, and as such, their barbarity lessened.<sup>212</sup> This point is reinforced when Totila is given command of the Gothic forces, for the use of the term ‘barbarian’ drops dramatically; when Totila himself is mentioned, the use of ‘barbarian’ is even rarer. The size of Gothic forces by this stage is much smaller than it was before Rome when Vittigis was in charge. Totila even marks out this drop in size – in other words, the contrast between the earlier myriads strong Gothic force to the current, ‘Romanesque’ size – in a couple of speeches. In the first of the two speeches, at 7.4.12, Totila notes the decrease, “going from 200,000 men to 5,000...”; in the second, incidentally at 7.21.4, he compares the difference in size between the Goths at Rome, and the Romans “earlier we had collected 200,000 of the most warlike soldiers...we were defeated at the hands of 7,000 Greek men”. Significantly, in that second speech, after noting their defeat by the Romans, he also gives the current size of the Roman army, which is two myriads strong, and contrasts it with the pitiable Gothic force currently at their

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<sup>210</sup> They even explicitly say this, noting that they would lose if they allied themselves with the Romans against the Franks.

<sup>211</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.22.13: ξὺν τοῖς πάντων πολεμιώταις.

<sup>212</sup> The crowning of Totila also seems to usher in a period of increased emphasis on their ‘Gothicness’, rather than their ‘barbarity’.

disposal: “But now, we happen to have been reduced to a few unarmed and pitiable men, without any experience at all, and so are unable to defeat more than 20,000 men from the enemy”.<sup>213</sup> In this speech of Totila not only do we see that the Gothic number is much smaller than it was before, but it has moved out of the myriad range – their barbarity is thus lessened<sup>214</sup> – while the Romans have moved into it, an important reversal that coincides with the rise of Totila, and the fall of Belisarius.<sup>215</sup>

Besides its changing relationship with the term myriad, the use of ‘barbarian’ can be either a matter of arbitrary choice,<sup>216</sup> or, contingent on the focalizer in a specific context. When the Roman envoys come before Theodohad regarding the brewing conflict between the Romans and Goths, they refer to him as “ruler of the Goths” in direct speech, when they themselves are the focalizer;<sup>217</sup> but, when the speech concludes, and Procopius becomes the narrator-focalizer, he refers to the “leaders of the barbarians”.<sup>218</sup> To a certain degree this works for who gets called Roman as well. At 5.18.40, when a certain Vacis, one of Vittigis’ commanders, is speaking, albeit indirectly, to the citizens of Rome, he calls the Roman soldiers Greeks,<sup>219</sup> and marks out their faithlessness

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<sup>213</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.21.5.

<sup>214</sup> Indeed, in the lines surrounding this speech Procopius uses the words Goths, and not barbarians, to identify Totila’s forces.

<sup>215</sup> Belisarius’ failed attempts to secure bases from which to operate in Italy against the Goths on his return reads like the Athenians’ similar largely unsuccessful attempts to secure bases in southern Italy and Sicily in book 6 of Thucydides’ *Histories*; both characters, Belisarius on the one hand, the Athenian expeditionary force on the other, failed in their objectives and returned home in shame. Cf. Procop. *Wars* 7.19.8: “For they did not hold any other strongholds in this land, but everyone everywhere was hostile to them”; Thuc. 6.44.2: “the sailed along Italy, and none of the cities would receive them”.

<sup>216</sup> A scene that illustrates well Procopius’ arbitrary usages of the terms barbarian and Goth comes during his description of the fighting in the lines from 5.29.24ff. This is also the case later during the siege at 6.2.19ff., when focalization also plays no part in the distinction between barbarian and Goth.

<sup>217</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.7.17.

<sup>218</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.7.22.

<sup>219</sup> The reference to the Roman soldiers as Greeks is also appropriate because the citizens of the city of Rome would likely have seen themselves as Romans, and the ‘Byzantines’ as Greeks, at least the well-educated found amongst them. The usage was also derogatory. In actuality, many of the Roman soldiers would have spoken a host of different languages. Latin was the language of command. Cf. Procop. *Wars* 5.29.11, where Vittigis calls the Roman soldiers Greeks in the course of a speech.



for abandoning the Goths. When the focus shifts back to the Romans, and more specifically, Belisarius, the Goths are now called barbarians.<sup>220</sup> There are a series of skirmishes a few books later and Procopius wavers back and forth between Goth and barbarian, here largely depending on who is the focalizer, Vittigis in the former instance, Belisarius in the latter.<sup>221</sup> This continues for the next several books in the manner of the following excerpt: “On account of this, **Belisarius** contended stoutly that the **barbarians** had been defeated. **On the other hand**, the **Goths**, bearing in mind the unexpected event that had happened to them, did not go forward...”;<sup>222</sup> there is a similar construction a couple of chapters over.<sup>223</sup> The phrase, “on the other hand” (*de*), marks the transition in focalizer from Belisarius to the Goths. Indeed, when the mood suits him, Procopius is quite willing to use the term Goth, particularly when they are the focalizers. When Procopius, the narrator, wants us, the readers, to feel sympathy for the plight of the Goths, he unsurprisingly uses Goth. This is the case when Trajan perceives the opportunity presented to him during an engagement at 6.5.21ff., and charges at his foes. Procopius flips from barbarians<sup>224</sup> to Goth<sup>225</sup> as he describes the incredible slaughter of the out-generalled (καταστρατηγηθέντες), and terrified (δείσαντες), Goths. When Totila enters the scene, the importance of focalizers is even more marked: “But, since they had been defeated at the hands of the barbarians and still held them in great fear, they in no way wanted to follow Demetrios against Totila and the Goths”.<sup>226</sup> In this sentence “the barbarians” and “the Goths” refer to the same thing. Focalization is an important factor in the differentiation in use between ‘barbarian’ and ‘Goth’.

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<sup>220</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.19.1.

<sup>221</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.22.1ff.

<sup>222</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.27.29.

<sup>223</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.29.24.

<sup>224</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.5.20.

<sup>225</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.5.22-23.

<sup>226</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.6.19.

### **Part III: Generalship in the 'Belisariad'**

As with the *Persian Wars* and *Vandal Wars*, generalship remains a central aspect of Procopius' understanding of battle in the *Gothic Wars*; there is no need to go over the same issues that I have in the previous two chapters. Here, in this third section of the chapter, I shall focus on three other interesting aspects of Procopius' portrayal of generalship: examples of 'heroic leadership in general', as identified by Lendon; the Achilles/Odysseus dichotomy, much stressed by Wheeler; and the characterization of Belisarius as both a Roman general and a Homeric hero.

#### **Leading From the Front – Heroic Leadership**

Lendon noted 'heroic leadership in general' in one of his brief discussions of Procopius, and listed several examples from the text.<sup>227</sup> Of those from the *Gothic Wars*, the first comes at 5.7.5, and involves Mundus, the Illyrian general. The commander learns that his son, Maurikios, has perished, and as a result, "with a great fury at what had happened, he immediately went after the enemy in disorder."<sup>228</sup> Not surprisingly, the failure to tame his emotions leads to Mundus' death.<sup>229</sup> Heroic leadership this very well may be, for Mundus' actions lead to the death of a number of enemy combatants; but, Procopius poignantly calls the battle a "Cadmean victory". We should probably see this as quiet censure of Mundus' rashness. Indeed, not only does Procopius seem to be speaking out against undue rashness and battle in general; but also against the general

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<sup>227</sup> Lendon 2005: 385, n. 32.

<sup>228</sup> According to Ammianus Marcellinus (Amm. Marc. 19.1.7), the Chionitae general Grumbates is also motivated to such actions when his son is killed during the opening stages of the siege of Amida in 359.

<sup>229</sup> In the context of the *Persian Wars* I noted in the requisite chapter above that failure to control one's emotions usually leads to trouble, whether defeat, or death. For Xenophon, such a failing is something that a commander should avoid. Cf. Xen. *Anab.* 3.1.42, *Cyr.* 3.3.19; Wheeler 1991: 145.

himself risking too much. For the next time that heroic leadership is discussed,<sup>230</sup> it nearly brings about the end of the entire Roman enterprise in Italy. Belisarius, in a sequence that runs from 5.18.4 onwards, charges into battle and is nearly killed; he is only saved by the actions of his guards and spearmen.<sup>231</sup> Procopius makes it clear on two occasions, though indirectly, that this was a foolish action on the part of Belisarius.<sup>232</sup> To be sure, the folly in leading from the front, and, the dangers inherent in being ruled by emotion, are themes stressed throughout the examples picked out by Lendon.

In the next passage, at 6.2.21, Procopius describes another incident of impetuosity. Bochas is commanded by Belisarius to go to the Plain of Nero. He ends up engaging the Goths and in the melee, is surrounded and attacked by twelve Goths.<sup>233</sup> His armour saves his life, though he still suffers some significant wounds.<sup>234</sup> This skirmish turns out in the Romans' favour, but not before the arrival of reinforcements.<sup>235</sup> Procopius – the narrator – assumes in these situations that such rash actions will lead to serious injury, if not death itself, as his comment in the next example indicates. There, a certain Aquilinos, a guardsman of Belisarius, charges into the middle of the enemy camp and engages his foes.<sup>236</sup> Procopius notes: “When many of the enemy surrounded him and fired missiles, his horse was struck and fell; on the other hand, he

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<sup>230</sup> The third example that Lendon lists comes at 5.18.10-14. This is mistaken, for there is no mention of any specific commanders in this section, or for any individuals for that matter, but rather vague references to “displays of *arete*”. If anything, what this passage does do is support Lendon's claims that competition fuelled much of the brave actions of soldiers in Greek and Roman battle.

<sup>231</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.18.11-13. I discuss this episode in greater detail below p. 297, in the context of my examination of the differences between the Achilles ethos vs. the Odysseus ethos, and their manifestation in the persons of Belisarius and Totila.

<sup>232</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.18.5; 5.18.15. Procopius' comments concerning how this 'heroic leadership' of Belisarius nearly brought the invasion to an end, frame the episode itself, thereby stressing its importance, and the general's folly.

<sup>233</sup> For a discussion of the gore in this passage see above p. 258.

<sup>234</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.2.24.

<sup>235</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.2.24.

<sup>236</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.5.18.

himself, paradoxically, fled through the midst of the enemy.<sup>237</sup> This minor event, which Procopius has highlighted, does not further the aims of the Romans in this battle; this underscores its probable didactic aim. That is, avoid overly rash behaviour because of the detrimental effect it is likely to have on the actor himself, and/or his army. In the next case, involving Mundilas and Longinos, the latter does manage to be the cause of the Gothic flight, though he himself falls in the encounter.<sup>238</sup> The penultimate case comes in book seven and involves the Roman commander Isaac, who, upon learning of Belisarius' success, decides to seek out some glory of his own.<sup>239</sup> As with the previous case this sortie initially brings results, for we learn that he manages to take the entranced enemy encampment, which is under the supervision of Ruderichos, "a man brave in war".<sup>240</sup> However, after perceiving the paltriness of the Roman force, the Goths reverse their decision and come back and re-take their base, killing many and capturing Isaac in the process.<sup>241</sup> The last case comes towards the end of the *Gothic Wars*. Not far from Ravenna a certain Verus engages the Goths, and in the course of the battle, "he loses many of his followers and he himself dies".<sup>242</sup> Yet again we have a case of 'heroic leadership' bringing death. The balance of the evidence suggests that Procopius was not a proponent of this tactic. The very fact that he identifies these passages, which, in the context of the *Gothic Wars* as a whole, make up a small portion of the narrative, suggests that he wanted to highlight them. This was Procopius the narrator, taking up his didactic role, proclaiming that acts of folly are wont to lead to undesirable circumstances; he seems to be advocating an approach to generalship that stresses more care and sensibility. In other words, less of the Achilles or Alexander model of

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<sup>237</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.5.19.

<sup>238</sup> Procop. *Wars* 6.10.20.

<sup>239</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.19.23-24.

<sup>240</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.19.25.

<sup>241</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.19.29.

<sup>242</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.37.28.

generalship, and more of the Odysseus model of generalship. It is to that dichotomy that we now turn.

### **The Achilles Ethos<sup>243</sup> vs. the Odysseus Ethos**

Above, I looked at the fluidity of the term barbarian, the connection between myriads and barbarian, and, the fluidity of the concept, particularly in terms of the Roman/barbarian polarity. This discussion of generalship rests on another polarity besides the aforementioned Roman/barbarian one; it is one which Procopius emphasizes throughout the *Gothic Wars*, which further highlights the respective characterizations of the Roman and Gothic forces, and which, in some sense, takes us back to the Homeric context. This is the polarity between commanders who adopt the Achilles ethos, and those who adopt the Odysseus ethos;<sup>244</sup> by and large, the various Gothic commanders, such as Totila, and to a lesser degree Vittigis, adopt the former, while Belisarius goes with the latter.

The Achilles ethos, or ideal, relates to those commanders who prefer the traditional warrior ideal,<sup>245</sup> while the Odysseus ethos, or ideal, relates to those who prefer “intelligence, cleverness, and trickery instead of brute force and open confrontation.”<sup>246</sup> Indeed, over the course of the *Gothic Wars*, where the duel of generals is played out just as it was in the *Persian Wars* and *Vandal Wars*, the

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<sup>243</sup> Michael Whitby (pers. comm.) has asked whether a distinction between Ajax and Odysseus, rather than Achilles and Odysseus, might be more appropriate, given that Ajax, at least as characterized by tragedians such as Sophocles, was much more straight-laced, that is, less prone to slippery behaviour (such as abandoning his army), than Achilles.

<sup>244</sup> The model, as far as I know first proposed by Wheeler (Wheeler 1988a: xiii-xiv; Wheeler 1991; Krentz and Wheeler 1994: vi-vii; Wheeler 2007: 213-223), is a simple but convenient means of describing the divergent streams of generalship prescribed here in the *Gothic Wars*. The ‘Achilles ethos’ is the same as the ‘western way of war’ which is championed by Keegan (1993) and Hanson (2000). Despite their strong assertions, however, western forces have long used stratagems and have often sought to avoid pitched battle. Cf. Kaegi 1990: 64-65; Brizzi 2004: 15-41.

<sup>245</sup> Leadership of this type has been given different names by other scholars. Keegan (1987: 13-91), for example, characterizes Alexander’s bold leadership style as heroic.

<sup>246</sup> Wheeler 1991: 137. Odysseus is often given the epithet πολύμητις. Cf. Hom. *Il.* 10.148.

success of the Goths is largely contingent on the ability of the respective commanders to follow the precepts pertaining to the Achilles model rather than the Odysseus model; Belisarius, on the other hand, sticks to the Odysseus model with remarkable consistency, and, when he does not, it often leads to trouble. The first time that such a distinction is brought to our attention comes at 5.18.4, when Procopius suggests that the general, and more specifically, the Roman general, usually does not lead from the front, fighting amongst his men. Indeed, in the next line he says: “and as a result of this the affairs of the Romans happened to fall into a great danger, since the outcome of the war lay entirely on his shoulders”.<sup>247</sup> This line is not mere flattery, for the same sort of actions on the part of Alexander at the River Granicus in 334 BC nearly cost the Macedonians their war of conquest, even before it really had a chance to begin.<sup>248</sup> This was also a reality for the Persians and their shahs,<sup>249</sup> whether Achaemenid or Sasanid, and Alexander made Darius the focus of his attacks with his Companions at Issus and Gaugamela.<sup>250</sup> In this first instance where Belisarius departs from his usual practice, the Romans nearly run into trouble. The scene itself is reminiscent of the aforementioned episode with Alexander, for when the Goths perceive who Belisarius is, they start directing their attention at him,<sup>251</sup> like

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<sup>247</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.18.5. cf. Procop. *Wars* 5.18.13: “Thus the whole battle was focused on the body of one man”; 5.18.15: “But by some chance it happened to Belisarius on that day that he was neither wounded nor struck, although the battle took place around him alone”.

<sup>248</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 1.15.6-8. cf. Curt. 8.1.20; Diod. 17.20.5-7; Plut. *Al.* 16.8-11; Bosworth 1988: 42-43.

<sup>249</sup> Cf. Heckel 2008: 178, n. 38.

<sup>250</sup> Indeed, Heckel (2008: 61-65) has made the quite plausible case that the reason for Darius’ flight after Issus was not cowardice, but to prevent his own capture, and what that would have meant to the Persian war effort as a whole. Leading from the front was not a practice adopted by Sasanian kings, as we saw with the *Persian Wars*; though often present at battles, and especially sieges, they were not involved in the fighting themselves. On the Achaemenid kings see Xenophon (*Anab.* 1.8.22) and Arrian (*Anab.* 2.8.11). On the Sasanid kings of late antiquity see Whitby (1994).

<sup>251</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.18.8ff.

Alexander,<sup>252</sup> Belisarius is saved by the bravery of one of his men, in this case, one of his bodyguards.<sup>253</sup>

Belisarius maintains this Odyssean, even Hellenistic, model of generalship during one of the first scenes of frantic action during the siege of Rome. At 5.23.14ff we find him directing his soldiers in the defence of the city, and Procopius intersperses in this episode a considerable amount of technical detail, a point in keeping with a cerebral general which is what Belisarius is meant to be.<sup>254</sup> He also recognizes the importance that keeping up this approach is to the success of the Roman cause, as noted in a speech he gives to his restless troops, who do not share his comprehension of the situation:

I have not found any softness in you, men and fellow-soldiers, and I am not so terrified of the power of the enemy that I have shrunk from an engagement with them, but, when we were prevailing in the war thanks to sudden attacks, matters stood well; and, I thought that we must continue with the cause of our good fortune...for I know that the factor most likely to turn the scale of war is the frame of mind of the lot fighting, and it is this great eagerness that is wont to bring about success. Thus, a few men lined up with *arete* can defeat a large number of our foes, as each one of you know well; and, you learned this not by what you have heard, but by getting battle experience daily. Thus, do not put the former glory of my generalship to shame, nor the hope that rises from this eagerness of yours.<sup>255</sup>

Ignoring the other unmistakable Homeric overtones in this speech, such as the role of *arete* in success in battle, the desire for glory, and with that, the avoidance of shame, we see that Belisarius is quite aware of the limitations of his army, and so is willing to use the means at his disposal to overcome the enemy. Here that

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<sup>252</sup> In Alexander's case it was Cleitus who saved his king. Cf. Arr. *Anab.* 1.15.8.

<sup>253</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.18.12. This encounter between the Goths and the Romans is interesting for reasons besides its presentation of the Achilles/Odysseus dichotomy. On the one hand, the battle is almost brought to a disastrous conclusion for the Romans when Belisarius charges into the fray and is nearly killed; on the other hand, the battle ultimately turns out in the Romans' favour thanks to the bravery of a certain Valentinus, the groom of a Philotios (5.18.18). Thus, the battle is fairly symmetrical. Also, as with the battle of Dara, and Andreas the bath attendant, a significant part of a battle is affected by a relatively unknown figure. See chapter three above pp 156-157.

<sup>254</sup> Although one might argue that Belisarius does not have the opportunity to 'fight from the front' during the course of a siege, it must be noted that at no point in this scene does he himself attempt to engage the would-be attackers, through the use of missiles for example, from the city's battlements. On emperors fighting from the front during sieges in the Principate see Levithan 2008.

<sup>255</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.28.6-9.

means limiting his attacks to small-scale raids and ambushes, which, ideally, are carried out unexpectedly. Along with the recognition of the best sort of tactics to use, comes the importance of an awareness of the quality of one's troops, and how and when to use them effectively:

So, with things thus, he [Belisarius] wanted to have a cavalry battle alone on that day; moreover, the majority of the other infantry were not in a position to remain in their established spot, and having seized horses from the enemy, they had become not unpractised in riding, and were, for all intents and purposes, horsemen. On the other hand, the infantry being few, and, not able to make a phalanx worthy of note, nor bold enough to battle against the barbarians, but always wont to turn to flight at the first rush, he thought that they were not secure enough as regards the danger to deploy them by the walls there, but that they should stay quite close to the moat and in line, so that, if their attackers happened to turn their cavalry to flight, the infantry would receive those fleeing and together, since they were unwearied, make a stand against their foes.<sup>256</sup>

Like the former example, this description, in which Belisarius is the focalizer – and thanks to Procopius, we are provided with unique insight into his thoughts – we are presented with a general who uses his mind before his emotions. The Belisarius characterized here is not rash, but shrewd and sensible, a man who is aware of the condition of his army, and with the requisite information carefully gathered and in his hands, able to analyse the data and so, potentially, carry out an action likely to result in a desirable outcome, i.e., a victory.

Totila, the Gothic king who best fits the mould of a traditional Gothic king with the appropriate martial, Achillean, values, is noticeably different from his predecessors. Vittigis, the first of the two Gothic kings described in detail comparable to Belisarius, is characterized as a leader who does have a few of the qualities of an Achilles.<sup>257</sup> As regards Theodohad, his predecessor, he is even less of an Achillean general than Vittigis, and as Procopius' narrative points out, he does not last terribly long. Totila, on the other hand, is most assuredly Achillean, is the Gothic commander who stays truest to their traditional martial values, and as a result, has the greatest amount of success against the Romans

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<sup>256</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.28.21-22.

<sup>257</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.11.15, 5.11.17.



over the course of the war.<sup>258</sup> Getting back to Vittigis, he is characterized indirectly in his first speech, for one of the first points that he emphasizes is planning, something more in keeping with the cerebral generalship represented by Odysseus, than the warrior of Achilles.<sup>259</sup> Rather significantly, not long after Totila's introduction in the text, we find him acting in a very Achilles-like manner: he ties a rope around the neck of the Neapolitan Governor Demetrios and drags him to the wall of his city.<sup>260</sup> Indeed, in a subsequent speech to the people of Naples he calls his Roman foes not Romans, or even Greeks, as Vittigis had, but "opposites" (τοῖς ἐναντίοις);<sup>261</sup> where Belisarius was Odysseus at Rome, Totila, here at Naples, is Achilles. Indeed, this likeness is even more apt when Procopius turns to tactical matters: "For he would rather decide matters against them [the Romans] on a plain than to fight it out through some cunning devices [τέχναις τισί] or sly tricks [σοφίσμασι]".<sup>262</sup> Totila repeats this point several chapters later in a passage which further reinforces Belisarius' characterization as an Odysseus-like general, and himself as Achilles-like: "On the other hand, the enemy shut themselves inside these walls and decided that in no way would they come down to the plain and draw up in battle against us, but through sly tricks and continually delaying day by day, they frustrated the Goths and became masters of our property unexpectedly".<sup>263</sup> Totila's claims are not mere rhetoric, for Procopius as narrator reinforces the point by describing Belisarius' actions only three chapters later: "And since he [Belisarius] in no way had a force which was a match against the enemy, so that he could settle matters in a battle in the plain against them, he first contrived the following".<sup>264</sup> This line, as it is, is not an

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<sup>258</sup> In this discussion when I refer to traditional Gothic martial values I mean as understood by Procopius.

<sup>259</sup> Procop. *Wars* 5.11.12ff.

<sup>260</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.7.8-10.

<sup>261</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.7.12.

<sup>262</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.8.11.

<sup>263</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.16.22.

<sup>264</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.19.2

outright condemnation of the techniques adapted by Belisarius; we saw earlier that one of the best the features of an Odysseus-like commander was his ability to understand the military situation, the limitations of his men, and then act accordingly. On the first glance, Procopius seems to be reinforcing this. Nevertheless, it is when Procopius returns to the narrative and describes the outcome that we learn that Belisarius, at least at this juncture, does not have a good grasp of the situation, or a sufficient means of counteracting his limitations. We get some foreshadowing of trouble for Belisarius and company at 7.19.8 before the battle between the two sets (Gothic and Roman) of towers; a defeat in this engagement is further suggested at 7.19.22, several lines later. Procopius has not turned on Belisarius, nor is he necessarily haranguing against the Odysseus approach to generalship.<sup>265</sup> He has simply pointed out that he is no longer in command of the situation as he once was; that place is now occupied by Totila, who also has a different approach to warfare. Totila, the king, is employing tactics based on his Achilles-like approach to generalship, and when at his peak, which occurs a quarter to a third of the way into the *Gothic Wars*, so too are the Goths; meanwhile Belisarius is at his lowest – so too the Romans – as Procopius, the narrator, makes clear.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> At 7.26.19 Procopius criticizes Totila for acting without reason, sensibility, and foresight, traits more commonly associated with the Odysseus ethos: “With great fury, and, without thinking ahead, Totila enjoyed the stupidity resulting from his anger”.

<sup>266</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.13.14-19. Cf. Procop. *Wars* 7.22.7ff.

## **Belisarius: hero and general**<sup>267</sup>

So far, I have pointed out the remarkable points of contact between Procopius' description of combat in the *Gothic Wars*, and the descriptions found in epic poetry, and Homer's *Iliad* in particular. At this point one might wonder whether this parallel is appropriate, particularly when we consider that the world of Odysseus – to borrow the title to Finley's enlightening essay – was a world of heroes, something sixth century Byzantium was not, at least so it seems.<sup>268</sup> In this section I shall discuss one last aspect that should put us in a better position to address the *Gothic Wars*' Homeric character<sup>269</sup>: the presentation of Belisarius, and Procopius' conscious likening of him to a Homeric hero.

In this section, perhaps more than elsewhere in this chapter, I am going to stray from the field of battle and instead focus on an event that is some remove from the Italian theatre, but is, nevertheless, closely linked to what has transpired: Procopius' famous eulogy of Belisarius at the start of book seven.<sup>270</sup> The general had left Italy and returned to Constantinople with matters somewhat unsettled. After getting a mixed welcome from Justinian, Belisarius received a much more positive reply from the public: "Belisarius, however, was on the lips of all, and he was credited with two victories, something that no man had managed to pull off

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<sup>267</sup> As noted by Clarke (2004: 78-79), 'hero' is problematic as a word in English because of its multiple meanings. I am going to use the word in the way that I think Procopius meant it. Although hero for Homer may, strictly speaking, only be a reference to a certain race of men (as in Hesiod's five stages of the Human race; Clarke 2004: 79), they certainly have a collective set of characteristics. Procopius undoubtedly recognizes that his heroes are not part of that race (and I do not see any reason why Procopius would not have been familiar with this ancient notion of the five stages). I believe that in order to emphasize the martial excellence of his characters, he describes them in terms of Homeric heroes. They possess the qualities of Homeric heroes without actually being Homeric heroes.

<sup>268</sup> Finley 1978: 21.

<sup>269</sup> On Homer in Byzantium see Browning (1975).

<sup>270</sup> Procopius includes a couple of details about Belisarius' physical appearance in his eulogy for the Roman military hero. When Malalas (5.12-27) describes the Trojan War he includes the physical traits of many of the heroes of the Trojan War. It is probably just a coincidence, but it is an interesting one nonetheless. Scholars have conjectured that Procopius compares Belisarius here to Pericles through allusions to Thucydides' funeral oration for the Athenian general. On Procopius' eulogy see Cresci (1986: 351-356) and Kaldellis (2004a: 197). For Thucydides' (2.65.6-8) eulogy of Pericles see Connor (1984: 60-64).

before; he brought two kings captive to Byzantium, and paradoxically made the nations of Gizeric, and of Theoderic, as well as their property, Roman spoils; and there had never been more notable men from among the barbarians".<sup>271</sup>

Belisarius' fame rests with the people, the "all" in the passage, and this is important, for it brings up a Homeric point of contact concerning heroism; in reference to a discussion of 'continuing fame after death' Clarke says the following about martial excellence in reference to the Lycians and Sarpedon in the *Iliad*.<sup>272</sup> "martial excellence is part of a reciprocal contract: the noblemen are honoured by their people because they achieve fame (*kleos*...) and thus glorify the Lycian people as a whole, and this in turn encourages the warriors to continue their display of prowess and maintain their good name."<sup>273</sup> As with the Homeric heroes, Belisarius' fame rests with his people, and is based on success in battle.<sup>274</sup> Indeed, the first thing emphasized is invariably one of the most important, and here it is Belisarius' military victories, particularly those in Africa and Italy. It is probably also significant that in his eulogy Procopius praises Belisarius for his wealth, and the size and quality of his personal force, among other things. By juxtaposing his description of the crowds' reaction to his presence with lines concerned with matters such as these, Procopius is characterizing the general as a great military hero, a point reinforced by the focalization of the Constantinopolitan public's thoughts about his triumph; moreover, it is as a martial hero in the vein of his Homeric predecessors. Some of this was borne out by my discussion above of barbarians, Goths, and Romans: the Goths and Romans are characterized in a remarkably similar way and are

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<sup>271</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.1.4.

<sup>272</sup> Clarke (2004: 77) quotes the passage, 12.315-328, at length.

<sup>273</sup> Clarke 2004: 77-78. There are innumerable cases in the *Wars* where combatants are said to have made "displays of valour"; *kleos* too is often mentioned. See above pp. 264-268.

<sup>274</sup> Duty aside – and as regards duty we think of Hector – one wonders if Belisarius agreed to the campaign in Italy immediately following the African campaign because of the reception he received, which would again be in keeping with Homer's world.

composed of men with similar backgrounds;<sup>275</sup> in many cases they also share the same qualities and virtues. The great Roman hero Belisarius is also a king of sorts,<sup>276</sup> like Odysseus over Ithaca. Both men are under the supreme command of another: with Odysseus it is Agamemnon, with Belisarius Justinian. What is more, like the Homeric hero Achilles, who commands a select group of soldiers in the Myrmidons, Belisarius commands *buccellarii*, who some modern scholars have suggested were something of an elite regiment.<sup>277</sup> Though we have not yet reached Procopius' statement of Belisarius' virtues in the Thucydidean eulogy, it is already clear that the Homeric echoes are quite stark.

In his description of Belisarius' virtues, Procopius places particular emphasis on those pertaining to his military career: with few exceptions the eulogy is concerned with Belisarius' military exploits. It opens at 7.1.8 with his talents as a commander, and finishes at 7.1.21 with a reference to the siege of Rome. At the beginning Procopius says the following:

The love of him as a commander among the soldiers and rustics was incredible, because he was the fondest of all men at giving gifts to the soldiers; for whether they had performed well in battle or been wounded, he emboldened them with piles of cash, and, he rewarded those who acted gloriously with armlets and torques, which they could have as prizes; on the other hand a soldier who had lost his horse or bow or anything else was immediately provided with a replacement by Belisarius.<sup>278</sup>

Procopius wraps up the military focused eulogy with the following extended description that is worth quoting in full:

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<sup>275</sup> In the words of Finley (1978: 38): "the Trojans are as Greek and as heroic in deeds and values as their opponents in every respect."

<sup>276</sup> Belisarius was, of course, offered the crown for Italy by the Goths only he rejected it. Whether Procopius had Homer in mind when he described this episode is another matter. Regardless, Procopius still gives the credit for the conquests (Africa and Italy) to Belisarius.

<sup>277</sup> On *buccellarii* in sixth century Egypt, and the Byzantine Empire in general, see Sarris (2006: 162-175). On their status as elite soldiers, see Rance (2007a: 356, 365). Cf. Kaegi 1981: 50-51; Whitby 1995: 72-73, especially 73, n. 41.

<sup>278</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.1.8. Not only are some of these features Homeric in quality, one also detects some echoes of Alexander, particularly in regard to Belisarius' attention to the wounds and battle performance of his soldiers. Cf. Arr. *Anab.* 1.16.4-5, 2.7.7, 2.12.1, 2.23.4, 4.18.7, 7.10.3-4, Lendon 2005: 128.

In addition to all these other qualities he was especially shrewd, and if ever he found himself in dire straits, he would think of the best and most suitable solution. When embroiled in the dangers of war he was courageous, steadfast, calculating, and exceptionally daring; and he would always attack when the risk was minimal, and he would delay if necessary, according to the exigencies of the situation. Apart from these things, when he found himself in a terrible predicament, he remained hopeful and understanding, even when things were unsettled; and when things went exceptionally well, he was neither full of himself nor stuffy.

Thus, as long as he was in command of the Roman army in Libya and Italy, he continued to be victorious, and always acquired whatever was close at hand. But when he went back to Byzantium after he was summoned, his *arete* was still recognized to a greater extent than it had ever been before. For he surpassed all in *arete*, authority, and in the size of his estate; and he was exalted more than any previous general because of the number of bodyguards and spearmen he had; and naturally he became formidable to all commanders and soldiers. For, I think that no one would dare to disobey his orders, and none of his men would refuse to do what he commanded, and so dishonour his *arete* while fearing his power. For he furnished 7,000 horsemen from his own household; none of them were worthless, and each of them, in fact, would stand at the front of the battle-line, and they were deemed worthy of challenging the best of the enemy's troops. The Roman elders, when they were being besieged by the Goths, watched what was transpiring in the many battles of the war, and cried out in great wonder that one man's household was bringing down the power of Theoderic.<sup>279</sup>

There are many important points here, some of which we have already discussed. Towards the end Procopius returns to Belisarius' wealth and gives us the size of his personal retinue. Belisarius is very much a warlord with his own personal army. That army is not composed of rabble, but those who would stand at the front of the battle-line and challenge their foes; perhaps we are to understand that Procopius here means single combat. Again, this seems quite Homeric.<sup>280</sup> There are other qualities worth mentioning, such as Belisarius' mental capacities. When reading the first lines of the passage we are immediately reminded of Odysseus, who was also shrewd, quick-thinking, and resourceful on the field of battle; although Odysseus is better known for these qualities in the *Odyssey*, there are places in the *Iliad* where he displays these

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<sup>279</sup> Procop. *Wars* 7.1.13-21.

<sup>280</sup> See, for example, Hom. *Il.* 12.315-328, where Sarpedon urges Glaucus to prove his worth on the field of battle, which involves standing at the front. Cf. Van Wees 1988: 2; Wheeler 2007: 192-197.

attributes.<sup>281</sup> Belisarius is a number of other things of course, some of which are unsurprising. Belisarius is daring, but also prudent. Given the discussion above, we should not be surprised that Belisarius is remarkable for his *arete*.<sup>282</sup> There are some other qualities that are a bit surprising, and at first glance seemingly out of step with Procopius' characterization of the general in battle to this point; not only is Belisarius a great warrior and leader, but he is also a leader who is feared by his subordinates. When we consider that Procopius refers to two incidents alone in the *Wars* where there are any moments where Belisarius might be considered frightening, this seems to be out of place.<sup>283</sup> This ascription, however, is not atypical for the Homeric hero, particularly the Odysseus of the *Iliad*. The Iliadic heroes are capable of remarkable anger. One of the key themes of the poem itself is the wrath of Achilles. Odysseus is also capable of remarkable fury, as when he massacres the suitors in the *Odyssey*, or when he lashes out at Thersites. Indeed, Odysseus' outburst with Thersites seems most like the rage, and the subsequent fear that it inspires, referred to here in the *Wars*. For, much like Thersites, Belisarius' men are of a lower status than their commander, and find themselves subject to his authority and *arete*. The consequences of

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<sup>281</sup> See Hom. *Il.* 10.248-579.

<sup>282</sup> Here there can be little doubt that the meaning of *arete* envisaged by Procopius here is very much like that described by Adkins (1997: 706). Cf. above pp. 264-268.

<sup>283</sup> See Procop. *Wars* 3.12.8-22; 6.8.1-18. Procopius does comment on the soldiers' views of Belisarius in the presence of Antonina in the *Secret History* (2.18-37). Despite the seeming differences between the *Secret History* and the *Wars* there are in fact a number of correspondences, as noted by Cameron (1985: 49-66). The *Secret History*, much like book 8, supplements the first 7 books of the *Wars*. Indeed, the respective figures of Belisarius in the two works are not mutually exclusive. In both works Belisarius comes across as a tragic figure, with the principal difference being that this comes across through his actions in the *Wars*, and through Procopius' comments in the *Secret History*. Procopius, of course, also focuses more on Belisarius' actions on the field of battle in the *Wars*, whereas in the *Secret History* it is his relationship with his wife. For example, Procopius (*SH* 5.3-7) elaborates on Belisarius' tremendous retinue and estate by claiming that Belisarius developed a lust for money over the course of the *Gothic Wars*. We also find a passage in which Belisarius seems to be acting very much in accord with what might best be called a Homeric code of honour: "as soon as he [Belisarius] got inside the walls of the city, he would immediately seize his arms and, as is fitting for any virile man, was minded to act nobly against his wife and those who had wronged him" (Procop. *SH* 4.40).

disobeying can be severe.<sup>284</sup> On balance, then, Belisarius is very much the Homeric hero, not without his faults; his martial excellence can bring him to the dizzying heights of success, but, this means that he is also prone to the miseries that accompany heroism.

### **Chapter Overview**

Whereas in the previous two chapters I examined how Procopius focused on the unity within the respective sections, the *Persian Wars* and the *Vandal Wars*, in the *Gothic Wars* – even more so than in the *Vandal Wars* – Procopius emphasizes the unity of all first seven books of the *Wars* by returning to the horse-archers from the preface. We also find a change in quality, for much of the *Gothic Wars* is given a Homeric character, and this is especially evident in Procopius' extended description of the Siege of Rome. Numbers are used to characterize barbarians, and the greater the number, the greater the barbarity of the respective peoples. Tactics largely reigned supreme in the *Persian Wars*, with morale making a spirited rise in the *Vandal Wars*; in the *Gothic Wars*, on the other hand, both theoretical conceptions of combat are presented, this time through the 'Achilles ethos' versus 'Odysseus ethos' dichotomy, which are embodied by Totila and Belisarius respectively. Bearing the results of the past three chapters in mind, I now turn to book 8.

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<sup>284</sup> Of course, the fact remains that Procopius does not really convey this side of Belisarius in the *Wars*, though in general he does not shy away from portraying his lesser qualities.



## Chapter 6: Book VIII

I now come to Book 8, the final instalment of the *Wars*, which was published some years after the first seven.<sup>1</sup> Where the previous books are organized by theatre, this last book covers those which he felt necessitated an update. Indeed, in Dewing's words: "the eighth book was added later as a supplement to bring the history up to about the date of 554, being a general account of events in different parts of the empire."<sup>2</sup> When we turn to those sections focused on the east, in some sense it reads very much like the *Persian Wars*; when we turn to Italy, the *Gothic Wars*. On the one hand, Procopius has managed to keep the style of the earlier books in their relevant spot; on the other hand, there are parts of the Persian narrative that evoke the most heroic of clashes in the *Gothic Wars*. Yet, for all the similarities and continuity with the rest of the *Wars*, there is much in book 8 that is new. For one thing, there are many more narratorial interventions, some of which are attempts to bring unity between the first seven books and this eighth book; many of them refer to earlier passages. Also, even though Procopius himself is absent from the action as a participant, he compensates by giving more explicit comments about the events, though even here he does not stray too far from the themes propounded in the earlier books.<sup>3</sup> In this sense, book 8 has a style similar to that found in the *Secret History*.<sup>4</sup> Geography and ancient texts are two further notable differences; there are many more geographical excursions, and, Procopius makes more explicit

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<sup>1</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.1.1-2.

<sup>2</sup> Dewing 1914: ix.

<sup>3</sup> Some of his intrusions come across as reactions to any criticisms his first seven books might have received. A particularly striking example comes at 8.6.9-10. Indeed, Procopius seems especially bent on stressing his authority: he is the best man possible to describe these events, and some of his readers may have forgotten this.

<sup>4</sup> What is more, both works essentially perform the same function, which is, to fill in the gaps that have been left with the conclusion of the first seven. Though circumstantial, these similarities between book 8 and the *Secret History* would seem to support Evans' (1996a: 312) date for book 8, and Croke's (2005b) for the *Secret History*, assuming, that is, that they were written around the same time (557/558).

references to ancient literature than he ever had before, even going so far as to quote some texts verbatim.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, in some ways this book is the most Herodotean part of the *Wars*; given his combative attitude, at least as regards the numerous stories, many of which are mythological and which he sees fit to refute, it might also be the most Polybian. Bearing all of this in mind, and given its unique character, in a departure from chapters 3, 4, and 5, I shall treat battle issues sequentially as they arise in the text, rather than thematically as I have previously. Those battles and sieges that I shall discuss include the River Hippis, Petra, Archaeopolis, Senogallia, Busta Gallorum, and Mons Lactarius.

### **River Hippis**

In Procopius' description of the battle of the River Hippis, which took place in 550 in Persarmenia, we find the penchant that was so pervasive in the *Gothic Wars*.<sup>6</sup> Here events are largely focalized through one Artabanes, as a result of which the Persarmenian comes across as the doer of some remarkable feats, principally the slaying of 120 men.<sup>7</sup> This detail hails from Artabanes' past and it stresses his martial qualities, so preparing the audience to expect a further display of remarkable deeds. Prior to Artabanes' introduction the battle had produced little of substance, being little more than a series of charges and counter-charges.<sup>8</sup> As the narrative advances, there are two episodes in this battle that suggest a blending of elements from the *Persian Wars* and the *Gothic Wars*. The first is a single combat involving the aforementioned Artabanes in which he manages to scare off his Persian opponents, a scene more reminiscent

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<sup>5</sup> See my discussion above pp. 34-46 in chapter one.

<sup>6</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.8.21ff. Cf. Rubin (1957: 508), Greatrex and Lieu (2002: 118), Syv  ne 2004: 469-470.

<sup>7</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.8.23, though he does note that he was accompanied by his followers (ξὺν τοῖς ἐπομ  νοις).

<sup>8</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.8.20.

of the episode involving Andreas at Dara rather than the skirmishes outside of Rome:

In this battle Artabanus brought two of the Roman soldiers with him into the middle, where some of the enemy men had also come. Artabanus hurried against them, and one of the Persians, a man especially fit, with a valorous spirit and a powerful body, he killed immediately with his spear, having thrown him from his horse and dashed him to the earth. But a certain one of the barbarians standing beside the man who had fallen struck Artabanus with his sword, hitting not at the vital spot but on the side of his head. Another of Artabanus' followers, a Goth by birth, engaged this man while he was holding his hand at the head of Artabanus, and having hit him on his left side, he [the barbarian] died. And the thousand were frightened by what had happened and fell back to the rear...<sup>9</sup>

Although Procopius does note the general part of the body that the respective participants struck, he neither goes into more precise anatomical detail about the blows, nor mentions any protruding implements, prominent features of the *Gothic Wars* incidents. And, like the single combat with Andreas, this victory gives the Romans a significant psychological advantage heading into the central part of the battle. The second episode comes several lines later, and here Procopius focuses on the trouble that befalls the Persian commander Chorianes:

In this battle Chorianes, the commander of the Persians, happened to be hit. However, by whom this man was struck, was not clear; for by some chance the arrow came out of a crowd and fastened itself straight into this throat, so killing him; and by the death of one man the scale of battle turned and victory came to the Romans.<sup>10</sup>

In this scene we have the anatomical detail that was somewhat lacking from the previous case, with Procopius identifying the body part pierced by the arrow; at the same time, we have single shot success. What is more, by the time we reach the end of the description we learn that the battle was very much a contest of bravado, a feature common to the *Gothic Wars*. Most of the focus is on the actions of, or surrounding, a few select individuals; one might call this the "face of

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<sup>9</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.8.25-27.

<sup>10</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.8.34-35. This is a recurring theme in the *Wars*, especially in book 8, that is the reversal and the concomitant change in momentum it gives to both sides.

battle” approach to narrative.<sup>11</sup> This focus on individual action and bravery was more a feature of the *Gothic Wars* than the *Persian Wars*, where Procopius was concerned with tactics, rather than individualism on the field of battle. As a whole the battle reads as a series of vignettes, as events are focalized through different individuals;<sup>12</sup> it is these acts that lead to the Roman victory, not greater tactical awareness or superior generalship.<sup>13</sup> The only section that is concerned with tactical matters comes following the single combat of Artabanes and the arrival of Gubazes and Dagisthaios. Philegagos and John perceive that their cavalry is no match for their opponents, and are worried about the Lazi,<sup>14</sup> so they dismount and form a phalanx,<sup>15</sup> to counter their charge, a perfectly reasonable approach given the increasing dominance of heavy cavalry in sixth century combat.<sup>16</sup> The only other feature that harkens back to the *Persian Wars* is the presence of Gubazes’ pre-battle exhortation,<sup>17</sup> although there is no matching speech from his Persian counterpart.<sup>18</sup> In this first battle, then, we see a meshing of styles, though, on balance, this ‘composite’ description of battle is more evocative of the *Gothic Wars* than the *Persian Wars*.

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<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the focus on individuals is reminiscent of Ammianus’ approach during, notably, the siege of Amida. See Kagan (2006: 23-51) for Ammianus and the “face of battle”, and see my comments in the introduction above p. 15.

<sup>12</sup> Following the death of Chorienes Procopius turns to a certain Alan who performed feats of bravery (8.8.37), and his death at the hands of John (8.8.38).

<sup>13</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.8.38.

<sup>14</sup> In a possible intratextual allusion, here we are perhaps reminded of the performance of the Isaurians and Lycaones at Callinicum. Procopius highlights a possible problem with the Lazi earlier, so bringing to attention any potential role they might have, at 8.8.3. As regards Callinicum, see Procop. *Wars* 1.18.38-40.

<sup>15</sup> Similar actions are taken at the Battle of Mons Lactarius and the Battle of Busta Gallorum, both, incidentally, described in book 8. See Rance (2005: 459-462) and below pp. 328-329.

<sup>16</sup> On infantry versus heavy cavalry in ancient combat see Arrian’s *Ektaxis*, and Rance 2004, 2007a: 348-359, 363-371; Syväne 2004: 185-189; and Wheeler 1979, 2004a, 2004b.

<sup>17</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.8.7-13.

<sup>18</sup> It must be said that the comparative lack of pre-battle speeches in the *Gothic Wars* is in large part due to the nature of the combat described, i.e., sieges.

## Petra

The first siege narrative follows shortly after the battle at Archaeopolis in the text and takes place at Petra.<sup>19</sup> As a siege description it is unique in the *Wars*. Where the *Persian Wars* descriptions were wont to focus on the divine, and the *Gothic Wars* descriptions on valour and negotiation, this one, or at least its first phase, is very much concerned with intelligence, innovation, and technology.<sup>20</sup> Diplomacy opens the description, and while these negotiations are taking place between the Romans and Persians in regard to the ongoing peace negotiations,<sup>21</sup> the former undertake a siege of this Caucasian city. Many of the opening lines are concerned with technical aspects, particularly the engineering works employed by both sides, and are replete with authorial interventions;<sup>22</sup> we are reminded of the detail regarding architecture found in the *Buildings*. This first phase of the description reads very much like a battle of wits. Where the siege of Rome was won with brawn, valour, and for Belisarius alone, brains, at this point, from the perspective of the victors, the siege of Petra is to be won with brains and valour. There is an ethnographic digression – a prevalent feature of book 8 – concerning the Sabiri.<sup>23</sup> This ethnographic interlude that precedes Procopius' focus on their siege-work innovation draws our attention to the fact that this is a notable feat, not only because such a device had never before been devised by anyone, despite the frequency of sieges in ancient combat,<sup>24</sup> but also because it was done by barbarians. What is perhaps most striking about the Sabiri is that Procopius actually highlights their ingenuity, and credits them with inventing a machine to allow the Romans to overcome the elevation of the Sasanid defensive

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<sup>19</sup> On the siege see Stein (1949: 505-508), Rubin (1957: 510-511), Greatrex and Lieu (2002: 118-119), and Syväne (2004: 496).

<sup>20</sup> The descriptions of the siege-works and machinery at Petra surpasses any that Procopius has provided earlier, and perhaps here more than anywhere else most closely matches those found in Ammianus.

<sup>21</sup> On the Endless Peace, and its portrayal by Procopius, see Greatrex (1998: 213-221).

<sup>22</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.11.11-18.

<sup>23</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.11.22-26.

<sup>24</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.11.27.

works, a feat the Romans were not able to achieve themselves, with our narrator all the while remaining cognizant of the fact that they are barbarians.<sup>25</sup>

Procopius' description of the ram is again striking for its technical detail; there is little doubt that this siege is the best evidence we have for the supposition that Procopius might have been an engineer.<sup>26</sup> The first 30 lines or so of the narrative are a scientific tour de force, and given Procopius', and to a lesser degree, his contemporaries' reputations as conservatives, somewhat surprising.<sup>27</sup> Given Procopius' explicit stress on the breadth of his reading in book 8, one wonders whether this focus is reflective of his perusal of earlier Hellenistic siege manuals, such as that of Aeneas Tacticus.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, the technical detail more or less prevails only in this opening phase before the fighting gets underway; then it is the valour of the participants that is conspicuous.

When the siege moves into its second phase, heroism, which had been mentioned earlier, replaces intellectualism. Indeed, amidst the early stages, while technological know-how is very much stressed by Procopius, we find Roman soldiers singled out for their valour (*ἀριστίῳ*) participating in the assault.<sup>29</sup> It is when the fighting gets underway, however, that heroism dominates, and, it is Bessas who first makes such a display, which is highlighted in a phrase reminiscent of Procopius' comments at Dara,<sup>30</sup> namely that it is a display such as has never been seen.<sup>31</sup> With that said, Procopius' seemingly positive comments are in fact couched with criticism, for the narrative that follows,

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<sup>25</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.11.28, 32.

<sup>26</sup> On this point, and Procopius' career in general, see Howard-Johnston (2000) and chapter 1 above pp. 54-56.

<sup>27</sup> On Procopius and sixth century conservatism see Cameron (1985: 46).

<sup>28</sup> For Hellenistic technological innovation, and how it pertains to warfare, see Shipley (2000: 334-341), Chaniotis (2005: 97-99), Bugh (2006: 280-288), Keyser and Irby-Massie (2006: 259-261), and de Souza (2007: 451-454).

<sup>29</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.11.32. Cf. Procop. *Wars* 8.11.35: "the most warlike men" (in regard to the Persians).

<sup>30</sup> Of course, Procopius puts his comparable statements from Dara following the battle itself, adopting an inductive approach (Procop. *Wars* 1.14.54) For Dara see above pp. 131-133.

<sup>31</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.11.41.

at least in its initial phases, undermines this claim. The outnumbered defenders are having some success in holding off their assailants, which is at first unremarkable given the tactical advantages those defending a city usually had.<sup>32</sup> But, during the attempted mounting of the walls, Bessas himself falls to the ground.<sup>33</sup> As we would expect, this attracts the attention of the Persians who now direct their fire at the general; fortunately for him, as with Belisarius at Rome, his bodyguards rush to his defence and, being fully armed, use their shields to create a protective barrier to ward off the missile attacks.<sup>34</sup> The scene described is quite frantic, with other Romans coming to their commander's aid by directing their attacks at the Persian bowmen at the walls.<sup>35</sup> Procopius describes the actions of the guardsmen as follows:

They defended themselves from the missile fire with all their strength. And there was a clashing of arms from the continual falling and snapping of the arrows on the shields and the rest of the armour, which became great, and each man was sustaining himself with a shout, heavy breathing, and hard work.<sup>36</sup>

Indeed, to this point in the action, and with the notable exception of the invention of the Sabiri, the only matter that might be considered of note is the exceptional efforts of the guardsmen.<sup>37</sup> Yet, their efforts do enable their aged commander to rise to his feet,<sup>38</sup> if slowly and sluggishly, and immediately come up with a plan to turn the battle in the Romans' favour.<sup>39</sup> When Bessas attempts to climb another

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<sup>32</sup> On this matter see Lenski (2007: 225).

<sup>33</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.11.44.

<sup>34</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.11.45. On Belisarius at Rome see above pp. 293-295.

<sup>35</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.11.46. Some of the details here, such as the heavy breathing, are not found elsewhere in the *Wars*, and are features of the "face of battle" approach.

<sup>36</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.11.46-47.

<sup>37</sup> If this is indeed the case, then we are left to wonder at the customary effectiveness of guardsmen of this sort in most battles; nevertheless, their behaviour is not unique for we have seen examples of this sort earlier in the *Wars* at 6.5.18-19.

<sup>38</sup> This depiction of an aged commander attempting to carry out brave deeds is not unique in the ancient annals of combat. A notable example comes from Agathias who describes the aged Belisarius' attempts to save Constantinople against the Huns in 559 (Agathias 5.18.11ff.). One might wonder whether Agathias was responding to, and expanding upon, the subtle criticism that Procopius seems to be hurling at Bessas here by portraying Belisarius so favourably in his own description.

<sup>39</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.11.48. At this point we might wonder whether the notable feat is the sluggishness of the commander, or his ability to come up with a suitable plan. As regards

ladder, his actions terrify the Persians and at first it seems that we have reached a turning point in the battle; yet, nothing comes of it, and Bessas denies the initial offer set forth by the Persians. Indeed, we do not even know whether Bessas was successful in his climbing.<sup>40</sup> The entry of the city itself is effected through the bravery of a certain Armenian named John, who leads a select number of fellow Armenians to a weakened part of the defences, and in this struggle slays a defender with a spear.<sup>41</sup> With an entrance now found, fire becomes a focus, a fact which brings to mind the stock features of the *Iliupersis*, and looks forward to the climactic moments of the battle itself.<sup>42</sup> We also get a uniquely gruesome scene, which might allude to Polybius,<sup>43</sup> for Procopius describes the charred bodies of the defenders consumed in the spreading fire.<sup>44</sup> Unsurprisingly, given the heroism that dominates this second phase of the siege,<sup>45</sup> Procopius brings his discussion to a close by returning to the aforementioned John, the Armenian, who falls in the course of the fighting.<sup>46</sup>

The fighting lingers at the acropolis of Petra, and, in this final phase, diplomacy, generalship, and heroism are the primary factors. It opens with a

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the former, Procopius describes a pathetic, and comical, scene in which Bessas orders his bodyguards to drag him by the feet not far from the wall (is this an allusion to Troy?). What is remarkable is that he does not do this using his own strength, but needs the assistance of his spearmen. On the other hand, the contrast between his feebleness and the merit of his plan (intelligence) is perhaps meant to draw attention to his intellectual qualities. Thus, his weakness and cleverness may be connected, and so would be very much in keeping with the narrative as a whole, considering Procopius' emphasis on brains over brawn. With that said, in anticlimactic fashion, Bessas then proceeds to climb yet another ladder in an attempt to scale the walls, a display of heroism and dogged determinism rather than cleverness. Robert Graves' overall portrayal of Bessas in his *Count Belisarius* picks up well Procopius' characterization of the general as found in book 8.

<sup>40</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.11.53. One could – and perhaps with reason – lodge charges of inconsistency at Procopius in this siege, though this may very well be the point if he was criticizing the Romans' efforts.

<sup>41</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.11.57.

<sup>42</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.11.59-62. On the importance of fire in the description of the sacking, or at least taking, of cities, see Paul (1982: 147) and Rossi (2004: 24-30).

<sup>43</sup> For the Polybian comparandum see above pp. 259, n. 58. cf. Polyb. 15.14.1-2.

<sup>44</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.11.61-62.

<sup>45</sup> Were it not for a general absence of the usual stress on generalship, we could, in keeping with my discussion in chapter 5 (above pp. 296-301), call the first phase the Odyssean phase, and the second the Achillean.

<sup>46</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.11.64.



peace proposal from the Romans, which the Persians reject – rather significantly considering the emphasis of phase 2 – in the belief that they will get heroic deaths fighting till the last.<sup>47</sup> Bessas decides to press on with negotiations, and sends an unnamed Roman soldier to the wall to persuade the Persians to yield, in a scene that may suggest that the two armies were similarly composed, much like the Gothic and Roman armies in Italy.<sup>48</sup> This last diplomatic gesture, however, fails, and fire becomes the focus as Bessas orders his men to burn the acropolis.<sup>49</sup> Like their compatriots earlier, they too are burned to death.<sup>50</sup> While alluding to the heroic deaths of the defenders, Procopius the narrator intrudes to tell us about the strategic importance of Lazica, thereby emphasizing the standard of Bessas' achievement.<sup>51</sup> To wrap up the siege, Procopius includes some technical detail – here about aqueducts – for the first time since the first phase of the description, so giving the narrative something of a ring structure.<sup>52</sup> With the siege concluded, Procopius now puts Bessas up for comparison with Belisarius:

And the emperor applauded him especially for the *arete* he displayed and for his prudence, because he brought down the whole of the wall. Thus, Bessas was admired again, both for what had happened, and for the arête that he had shown, among all men.<sup>53</sup>

In the narrative that follows, this summary of Bessas' background reads very much like an overview of the trials and tribulations suffered by Belisarius over the course of the text. After some early success we find that the public had high hopes for Bessas, though he stumbled at Rome.<sup>54</sup> It is striking that it is only now

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<sup>47</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.12.2.

<sup>48</sup> See Procopius' later comments concerning the composition of the Persian army: *Wars* 8.13.4-7. On the Procopius and the composition of the Persian army see Börm (2007: 159-163). Cf. Rubin (1995), and Dignas & Winter (2007: 63-67).

<sup>49</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.12.15.

<sup>50</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.12.16.

<sup>51</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.12.17-18.

<sup>52</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.12.21-27.

<sup>53</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.12.29-30.

<sup>54</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.12.32. Procopius' comments about Bessas raises interesting questions about the importance of warfare and victory among the Constantinopolitan public, a point already discussed in part by McCormick (1986: 64-68, 124-129). In this passage the

at the conclusion that Procopius explicitly draws our attention to the importance of generalship; all we had earlier were hints, such as the comment about the importance of the events juxtaposed with his notes about Bessas. Procopius is sure to let us know of the significance of this victory; he thinks that it is worth comparing with some of the earlier successes of Belisarius. Yet, his concluding statements about the role of Fortune and God in battle mean that Belisarius comes off much the better general.<sup>55</sup> For all Procopius' comments about technological innovation and heroism over the course of this siege, it is only at the end that we learn what was for our narrator the true cause of the Roman victory, God, an explanation very much in keeping with the first seven books of the *Wars*, particularly the *Persian Wars*. What we have with the siege of Petra is a description that includes elements previously unseen in Procopian battles, while also some of those that we have come to expect.

### **Archaeopolis**

The next major battle that Procopius describes is the Battle of Archaeopolis,<sup>56</sup> and he leads us in epic and rhetorical fashion into this description by providing us with a truncated catalogue of the Persian forces, and some of their tactical abilities, as well as a discussion of their strategic objectives.<sup>57</sup> When he turns to the Romans at 8.13.8, he does the same, giving both their troop total,

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populace seems to be not only very interested in military events, but also very well informed. Indeed, the importance of success seems to extend beyond the presence of generals, primarily those of Illyrian background, in the capital (Croke 2001: 90). Belisarius' triumph that followed his success in Africa, coupled with, among others, Tiberius II's during the reign Justin II suggest that for all its civilian character, the warrior ethos still persisted in the sixth century East Roman Empire.

<sup>55</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.12.34-35.

<sup>56</sup> For a summary of the battle see Rubin (1957: 511-513), Braund (1994: 302-305), Greatrex and Lieu (2002: 119-121), and Syv anne (2004: 470).

<sup>57</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.13.1-7. Some of the concerns raised here evoke those of Roman commanders, principally Belisarius (as at Callinicum), earlier in the text, about the loyalty of the allied troops (8.13.7). This also brings to mind the introduction to the *Persian Wars*, in which Procopius recalls the war between the Ephthalite Huns and the Persians late in the fifth century; it seems that a great deal of animosity still existed between the two nations. Cf. Dignas and Winter 2007: 97-98; B orm 2007: 206-210.

and the objectives and roles of select commanders and their units. Among those listed is Bessas, whom Procopius had only just highlighted for his role in the Siege of Petra. Here Procopius is scathing, painting Bessas as the cause of the Romans' misfortunes in a *prolepsis* in which he intrudes in the narrative,<sup>58</sup> all the while pointing to Justinian's role in this strategic blunder.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, in the narrative leading up to the battle itself, Procopius is concerned with strategic issues: while technology was very much the focus of Petra, strategy is shaping up to be the focus of Archaeopolis. This discussion of strategic issues is not merely a case of Procopius making a display of the breadth of his knowledge, but rather it fits into the broader context of the narrative itself, specifically the historian's treatment and analysis of the war;<sup>60</sup> Procopius' brief comments on the geography of Rhodopolis continue this trend.<sup>61</sup> Our narrator then provides us with some insight into Mermeroz's strategic thinking, before describing the commander's mocking of the Romans at Archaeopolis,<sup>62</sup> in a scene that is a reversal of the situation at Amida in the *Persian Wars*.<sup>63</sup> Mermeroz's behaviour, and even misguided arrogance, alludes to trouble to come; although the Romans there give him a confident response, the commanders at the river Phasis become

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<sup>58</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.13.11-13. Procopius' comments here lend credence to my view that Procopius may have been among those residents of Constantinople he recently referred to who had questioned Justinian's allocation of the Persian command to Bessas.

<sup>59</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.13.14. Procopius says that Justinian has only an indirect role in the failure, noting: "For the emperor Justinian was accustomed to forgiving the majority of those commanders who had failed". This could also be read as veiled criticism of Belisarius, as someone who had failed.

<sup>60</sup> Procopius and strategy is beyond the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, there are a couple of points that deserve mentioning. First, Procopius demonstrates a good knowledge of strategic, and related to that, logistical issues in this passage, which betrays his experience in the army. Second, whether or not his knowledge of Lazian geography is correct – on which see Börm (2007: 210-213) – he not only recognizes the importance of control of major access points, particularly in mountainous regions which are difficult to traverse, such as this, but he also connects topographic details to wider strategic concerns, something he also does in the *Buildings*. Cf. Kaegi's (1990: 76) sceptical comments about Procopius' knowledge of strategy, and Braund's (1994: 287-311) and Greatrex's (1998: 139-148) discussions of the war in Lazica.

<sup>61</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.13.21-22.

<sup>62</sup> "Having come as close as possible to the fortifications at Archaeopolis he greeted the Romans there with derision, and acting like a certain hot-headed youth implied that he would come back to them as soon as he could" (8.13.25).

<sup>63</sup> On the earlier Amida episode see above p. 129.

terrified, thinking their numbers too few to face the Persians, and they withdraw.<sup>64</sup> This is a regular Procopian – and, one might add, battle in general – feature, namely, fear leading to flight during, or before the start of, a battle. Procopius' allusion to trouble through Mermeroz's hot-headedness comes to fruition when the Persian commander discovers the Roman camp is empty: "Having burned the palisade of the Romans and seething with fury he immediately turned back and led the army to Archaeopolis".<sup>65</sup> Although the account had initially focused on strategy, the emphasis has now, as with the siege of Petra, become something else with emotional issues the focus. Besides the merging of narrative features from different parts of the *Wars*, what we are seeing in book 8 is a tendency to break down battle descriptions into different phases, with different features, such as technology or strategy, occupying the lion's share of one scene before dropping out in the next as Procopius shifts his focus.<sup>66</sup>

At the start of chapter 14 Procopius maintains this geography/strategy link with a brief description of Archaeopolis.<sup>67</sup> The narrative that follows keeps the pattern employed at Petra with a description of the diverse siege machinery, albeit in much less detail, which he justifies by referring to his earlier comments;<sup>68</sup> a digression on the origins of one of the barbarian groups involved, here the Dolomites;<sup>69</sup> before starting into the fighting itself, while describing Mermeroz ordering his army, dispatching units hither and fro.<sup>70</sup> With the Persian side clearly having the momentum, and the psychological level of the Romans at a low ebb, we get a curious interlude by Procopius before the battle's first speech: "then

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<sup>64</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.13.28.

<sup>65</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.13.30. This racing to battle with rage is a feature usually associated with Roman commanders in the *Persian Wars*, and so this episode here marks an unusual departure for Procopius. Indeed, the Persians in this Archaeopolis episode are characterized much more fully than the Romans. That point aside, this description does have many of the hallmarks of the battles from the *Persian Wars*.

<sup>66</sup> Admittedly, strategy, at least at the grand tactical level, returns to the fray following the speech by Odonachos and Babas.

<sup>67</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.14.1-3.

<sup>68</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.14.3-5.

<sup>69</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.14.5-9.

<sup>70</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.14.10-11.

Odonachos and Babas, either to display their *arête* or wanting to make trial of the soldiers, or perhaps some divine force moved them, left a small number of the soldiers alone, and ordered them to defend themselves from the battlements against those attacking the walls, and having gathered the majority of them made some brief exhortation and spoke as follows”.<sup>71</sup> Procopius is clearly puzzled by the decision to leave such few men to defend the walls; what is most puzzling for his audience, however, is the fact that he neither interjects with criticism, nor lets us know what they should have done, as he is wont to do, but only identifies the incident. Yet, that is not the only curious feature, for the speech itself contains some interesting points about the best means of defending a city in the case of a siege. Here are the pertinent points covered in the text: 1 – avoiding the enemy does not provide an opportunity for displays of martial prowess;<sup>72</sup> 2 – one’s bravery is determined by chance;<sup>73</sup> 3 – victory comes with valour;<sup>74</sup> 4 – attempting to hold out against an attacker by defending from the city walls ultimately will not bring success;<sup>75</sup> 5 – success in pitched battle is the only way to ensure success;<sup>76</sup> 6 – and the Romans are furnished with divine assistance.<sup>77</sup> Much of what Odonachos and Babas advocate is in keeping with the views of many of the common soldiery earlier in the *Wars*; quite often, when outnumbered by the enemy, even if only marginally, Belisarius would favour asymmetrical combat, and usually to the dismay of his troops.<sup>78</sup> Here the difference in troop

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<sup>71</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.14.14.

<sup>72</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.14.17.

<sup>73</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.14.17.

<sup>74</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.14.18.

<sup>75</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.14.19.

<sup>76</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.14.20.

<sup>77</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.14.20. Procopius literally says “help from above” [τὴν ἄνωθεν ἐπικουρίαν].

<sup>78</sup> See, for example, Procop. *Wars* 1.18.8-15. On early asymmetrical combat see Gat (2005: 114-132).

numbers is quite significant;<sup>79</sup> yet in another reversal of situations as with Mermeroz and his fury, here, in point 5, it is the Roman commanders imploring their soldiers to charge their foes, despite the troop disparity. Some of the points, such as 1 and 2, seem to allude to the siege of Rome when many of the heroic displays were made by Roman defenders from the city's walls, and then, success was often by chance. Though again, as with the general point about pitched battle, it is somewhat the reverse of the earlier Procopian situation, in this case the siege of Rome. Indeed, point 4 could be interpreted as a direct challenge to the tactics taken up by Belisarius in a similar scenario at Rome, and suggests to a large extent that heroism, and what defines it, was very much in the eyes of the beholder. The third point also seems to hark back to the *Gothic Wars*, though it could just as easily apply to a number of earlier Procopian battles. Point 6, divine assistance, is also familiar. All in all, the proposed charge by Odonachos and Babas seems desperate and foolhardy; given their situation, but, they clearly perceived it as the only viable option, and if nothing else, it would prove their heroism. With these words then, the fighting truly begins.

Fire dominates the next phase of the siege, coupled with treachery, elephants, and an *analepsis*. As with many an ancient siege, this one at Archaeopolis nearly came undone for the Romans as a result of the duplicitous actions of a certain Lazian.<sup>80</sup> This fellow had made an arrangement with Mermeroz to burn the places where the provisions were kept, with two possible outcomes envisioned, the first being that, with fire raging the Romans would abandon their attack and return to put out the flames so leaving the Persians free to scale the walls,<sup>81</sup> the second being that they would be so preoccupied with

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<sup>79</sup> We are not told the number of Persian soldiers, though we know there were at least 4,000 Hunnic allies; on the other hand, we know that there were 3,000 Romans (Procop. *Wars* 8.13.8) defending the city.

<sup>80</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.14.23. On the relationship of the Lazi with the Romans see Braund (1994: 268-314).

<sup>81</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.14.25.

fighting off the Persians that they would ignore the fire and so in a short time be forced to surrender.<sup>82</sup> As it turns out, Mermeroz has a reasonable grasp of the situation, though he seems to have muddled things as the Romans do turn to douse the flames, but it is only a portion of the total force; the rest stay to repulse the Persians.<sup>83</sup> Much like a number of the battles described in earlier parts of the *Wars*, the outcome of the battle is largely contingent on the ability of the respective commanders to perceive the situation accurately and then respond accordingly; at this point, Mermeroz seems to be failing, despite his attempts to do otherwise. Another recurring feature from past battles is the effectiveness of the unexpected attack. Though Odonachos' and Babas' proposed charge seems, ostensibly, to be an ill-fated tactic given their numerical inferiority, the result of their desperate foray is exactly as the two commanders would have hoped, so demonstrating their superior grasp of the tactical situation. What is significant about this description, particularly in relation to other such scenarios in the text, is that events are usually focalized through the Roman commanders, whereas here, things have largely, though not entirely, been focalized through the Persian commander:

Having attacked them suddenly and unexpectedly they terrified them and killed many, and they neither defended themselves nor dared to raise their hands against them. For the Persians, not at all expecting that they, being few, would go out against them, were standing apart from each other and were arranged in disorder so that they could storm the walls. Those who were carrying the battering-rams on their shoulders were without their shields and unprepared for battle, as you would expect, while the others holding strung bows in their hands were in no way able to defend themselves against the enemy pressing upon them who were themselves standing close together.<sup>84</sup>

This passage is followed by a couple of colourful incidents involving elephants,<sup>85</sup> the second of which is an *analepsis* to the siege of Edessa. Interestingly,

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<sup>82</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.14.25.

<sup>83</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.14.28.

<sup>84</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.14.30-31.

<sup>85</sup> Generally, Procopius seems much more interested in elephants in book 8 than he was in books 1 and 2; whether this is a reflection of the situation is hard to say, though it is

Agathias, Procopius' continuator, decides to replicate, expand upon, and conflate these elephant episodes in his own *History*.<sup>86</sup> To some degree these episodes are not very Procopius-like, for as we have seen, he tends to shy away from these sorts of anecdotes. Nevertheless, Procopius had flagged the importance of elephants in the opening lines of the siege, and here they serve to emphasize the role of fortune in the Romans' victory, which also reinforces Odonachos' and Babas' point about God's role.

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likely that Procopius decided to compensate for his more restricted access to information by putting greater emphasis on remarkable things, here the elephants. Earlier he had discussed siege equipment.

<sup>86</sup> Agathias concentrates his focus on one lone elephant, while Procopius describes two separate elephants. With that said, both scenes hail from a prolonged description of a siege in Lazica, both incidents do not mark any significant point in the narrative in and of themselves, though they do follow an important stage, and both come in the context of a charge on the part of one side. Agathias' description runs as follows: "...he struck the elephant that was bearing down on him ferociously with his spear and drove home the point, so that it was left dangling. **The elephant found the blow unbearable [ὁ δὲ πρὸς τε τὴν πληγὴν]** and since it was brandishing the spear before its eye **it was horrified and so leapt backwards, and, whirling round [κραδαινομένου ἔκταραττόμενος ὑπεξήγετο]** his trunk like an uncoiling spring, struck many of the Persians and sent them headlong, now stretching it out as long as it could go, and **emitting a harsh and wild noise [τραχύν τινα καὶ ἄγριον ἦχον ἀφίει]**. Suddenly he **shook off those seated on his back [τοὺς ὑπερθεν ἐστῶτας ἀποσεισάμενος]**, and having hurled them to the earth, he trampled them to death. Then he struck fear into the whole mob of Persians, the horses **reared up [ἄναχαιτίζων]** when he approached them, and cut through and shredded whatever he came across with his tusks. The scene was filled with lamentation and confusion" (*Hist.* 3.27.1-3). I have highlighted those particular parts that are most evocative of Procopius. The Procopian passages in question are: "Then it happened that one of the elephants because **it was struck [πληγέντα]**, as some say, or because it **suddenly became much distressed [ἦ ἀπὸ ταύτομάτου ξυνταραχθέντα]**, **wheeled round [περιστρέφεσθαι]** in disorder and **reared up, throwing off those mounted on its back [καὶ ἀναχαιτίζειν, καὶ τοὺς μὲν ἐπιβάτας ρίπτειν]** and broke up the line of the others" (*Wars* 8.14.32); "one of the elephants, mounted by a great crowd of the most warlike men among the Persians, came quite close to the fortifications such that it was likely that, in a short while, it would overpower those defending themselves from on top of the tower there, since a great number of missiles were falling from above, and take the city. For it seemed that it was some sort of machine, even a helepolis. But the Romans, having hung a young pig from the tower, escaped this danger. For, as is to be expected while it was suspended there, the porker let loose **some cry, and having been grieved by this [κραυγμὸν γὰρ τινα...ἠφίει, ὄνπερ ὁ ἐλέφας ἀχθόμενος ἀνεχαιτίζε]** the elephant **reared up** and started to **step back little by little and withdrew to the rear [κατὰ βραχὺ ἀναποδίζων ὀπίσω ἐχώρει]**" (*Wars* 8.14.35-37). Although Agathias' episode is much more detailed, as we would expect given the later historian's proclivities and even though in some of those cases different words have been used, as we can see, there are, unsurprisingly, more than a few points of contact between the two respective texts.



With the battle turning in the Romans' favour, Procopius returns to the Persian and allied focalization in a scene that comes across as a retelling of the final moments of the Battle of Callinicum in the *Persian Wars*, only this time, and not for the first time in this siege narrative, the situation has reversed.<sup>87</sup> Although it does not have the detail that we found in the fast-paced retreat described, again, in the Battle of Callinicum, there are again a number of similarities. The casualties weigh heavily in the Romans' favour with apparently several Persians killed. The panic among the fleeing Dolomites, the capture of the standards, and the death of the horses, also point towards Callinicum.<sup>88</sup> Following the retreat the siege comes to a close. In summation, with Archaeopolis we get again a number of distinct phases, with strategy dominating the first two. The importance of a correct grasp of the situation, along with the closing scenes that come with the Persian defeat, all evoke the *Persian Wars*, a point intended by Procopius which is made clear by his *analepsis* to the siege of Edessa. Where the description of Petra had at first been told in a manner reminiscent of the *Persian Wars*, with Archaeopolis this happens at the end. Another prominent feature of this siege is the number of instances where the events are presented reversed, that is as mirror images of those found in earlier, comparable, situations.

### **Senogallia**

The next battle described by Procopius is the Battle of Senogallia, which is unusual for the fact that it is a naval encounter, and the only substantial one in the whole of the *Wars*; it is something of an interlude in the midst of another

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<sup>87</sup> In the Battle of Callinicum it had been the Roman recruits from Anatolia that were the cause of much of the trouble to Belisarius and the Roman cause. As here, Procopius had identified this group earlier in the description, a telltale sign that they would have an important role in the narrative to follow.

<sup>88</sup> See my discussion in chapter three above pp. 151-156.

battle, namely the siege of Ancon;<sup>89</sup> and, despite its naval character, it is described in the manner of a land battle,<sup>90</sup> a point which Procopius later justifies. As with many of the substantial land battle descriptions this one opens with a catalogue of forces, here ships, only it is a truncated one.<sup>91</sup> We learn, for example, the names of a few of the Gothic commanders, namely Skipuar, Gibal, and Gundulf,<sup>92</sup> as well as the number of ships at their disposal, which is 47,<sup>93</sup> on the Roman side there are 50 ships,<sup>94</sup> and the two commanders are John and Valerian.<sup>95</sup> The battle itself is hastily arranged, as the Romans try to catch the Goths off-guard, seeing as they are short of provisions.<sup>96</sup> When the two sides come close to each other, as in the manner of a land-based battle, they decide to pause, arrange their forces, and implausibly, speak to the gathered troops on all of the ships.<sup>97</sup> The speech given by the two Roman generals is very Thucydidean, and evokes some points from the debate in book 6 about the Sicilian expedition.<sup>98</sup> The response from the Gothic commanders brings to mind

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<sup>89</sup> The battle of Cape Bon is a much shorter description, on which see above p. 217. For an overview of the Battle of Senogallia (Sena Gallia) see Rubin (1957: 518-519) and Syväne (2004: 508-509).

<sup>90</sup> One of the points noted by Adrian Goldsworthy in his closing comments at the conference “Discourses of War in the Roman World from Julius Caesar to Heraclius” March 8 at the University of Warwick was that Homer does not describe naval warfare; therefore, studying combat at sea has the best potential for studying battle in historians from a perspective shorn of literary obfuscation. Yet, there are always complications, as here Procopius claims that the battle resembled a land battle.

<sup>91</sup> It was not just the epic poets who prescribed (for their part indirectly) catalogues before battle, as the rhetoricians did too.

<sup>92</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.23.1.

<sup>93</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.23.2.

<sup>94</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.23.8.

<sup>95</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.23.14.

<sup>96</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.23.3.

<sup>97</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.23.13. Indeed, Procopius’ detail about the speech of John and Valerian to all of the gathered men in their ships is one of the most implausible details from any of his battle descriptions. This might suggest that Procopius’ audience, as well as Procopius himself, had only a limited knowledge of what was involved in a naval battle.

<sup>98</sup> In Thucydides’ debate about the expedition Nicias notes that the Athenians should bring along as many supplies as possible, given the likelihood of coming across hostile peoples (6.24), while John and Valerian note that war is largely contingent on food (8.23.15-18). John and Valerian also note that much of Italy from Dryus to Ravenna is hostile to them, much as Nicias does Sicily and southern Italy. These points are not often made by Procopius’ speakers, and so it stands out here as something un-Procopian, at least in the context of battle, and Thucydides is the most obvious parallel, though here the Romans won, while the Athenians ultimately lost.

some of the points made earlier in the *Gothic Wars* by other Gothic commanders; this suggests to me that Procopius constructed this speech based on what he felt was appropriate given what he knew had transpired earlier.<sup>99</sup> Procopius then qualifies his reasons for giving this sea battle the feel of a land battle by saying: “since it resembled a battle on land”.<sup>100</sup> His subsequent discussion reinforces this claim; he describes the volleying of arrows, and on occasion, skirmishes involving swords and spears.<sup>101</sup> Once this stage ends, however, the battle assumes a more maritime character. As with land battle, the Gothic ships run into trouble when they are disorderly, and this in turn is the result of a lack of experience. Procopius also puts great weight on the importance of the arrangements of the ships themselves, particularly as regards the intervals of the ships. He is quick to point out the contrast between the two, which is largely dependant on skill, something which the Romans have in abundance. When this is perceived by the Romans, they start charging their opponents.<sup>102</sup> The confusion of the Gothic ships, and the efforts of the Romans to exacerbate the situation, ultimately bring about the formers’ demise.<sup>103</sup> In the rout that follows, we find many of the stock features of a Procopian battle, such as the role of fortune, the lack of awareness of the situation which precipitates the flight, the abandonment of any thoughts of a heroic last stand in the retreat, and finally the fact that some were saved by some chance or other, while the others were killed or captured. Despite the possibility of being a wholly new type of battle description given the naval component, in the end Procopius falls back upon a host of the stock elements from his grammar of battle.

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<sup>99</sup> They charge the Romans with cowardice and call them Greeks (8.23.25), they highlight the folly of rashness (8.23.26), and the commanders’ appeal to their valour (8.23.26-28).

<sup>100</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.23.29.

<sup>101</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.23.30.

<sup>102</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.23.31.

<sup>103</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.23.34.

## Busta Gallorum

The second last battle of the *Wars*,<sup>104</sup> and one which has received some scholarly attention lately, is the Battle of Busta Gallorum.<sup>105</sup> As with the earlier battles described, this one is broken down into phases, the first of which contains vague allusions to Herodotus and Homer. After describing the marching of the respective sides, Narses' Romans and Totila's Goths, to the site of the battle, Procopius inserts a reference to an earlier Republican battle, one in which the general Camillus is said to have triumphed over the Gauls; this comment foreshadows Roman victory here over 900 years later.<sup>106</sup> Dewing is certainly right to point out that Procopius muddled his details.<sup>107</sup> But, insofar as Procopius believed what he read was true, this allusion serves its purpose as a literary device (foreshadowing victory).<sup>108</sup> Moving on, there is a diplomatic exchange between Narses and Totila, with the former urging the latter to surrender. Totila turns down Narses' offer, and the two decide to settle things in pitched battle, and interestingly enough, at a preset time,<sup>109</sup> something that we have not come

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<sup>104</sup> This second last battle is organized along similar lines to the battle of Dara. The same is true for Mons Lactarius and the Ephthalite/Persian battle. The two last battles in the *Wars*, then, mirror the first two, most likely a conscious attempt of Procopius to bring unity to his text.

<sup>105</sup> Philip Rance (2005) has recently discussed the battle in some detail. His main concern was finding out what Procopius' narrative tells us about sixth century warfare, and where Procopius leads us astray. Much of this article builds on Rance's earlier work on battle, particularly concerning what Maurice has to say about tactics and deployment. Despite Rance's detailed discussion, however, he does not cover the sorts of material that I have thus far in the *Wars* and as a result, there is still much that can be said. A full scholarly bibliography on the battle is provided by Rance (2005: 425-426, n. 4). Cf. Rubin (1957: 523-525).

<sup>106</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.29.4.

<sup>107</sup> Dewing (1928: 353, n. 2; Loeb edition and translation of Procopius). The fact is that we know very little about this period, with most of the sources, such as Diodorus and Livy, basing their accounts on much earlier, and lost works. Camillus does not seem to have been in Rome during its sack in 390 BC, but he may have had some role in the subsequent Roman recovery following their departure in the 380's. Indeed, even the question of who Procopius might be referring to when he says "they say" (8.29.4) is unclear, based on what he says about Camillus. Was he reporting a rumour, or tradition, still popular in Italy at that time, or, in keeping with much of the rest of book 8, was he referring to some text that he had read which described the account and that is no longer extant? Cf. Plutarch's *Life of Camillus*; and Drummond 1996a.

<sup>108</sup> There is no hint that Procopius made any conscious error here; thus, he is not playing any tricks on his audience.

<sup>109</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.29.8.

across in Procopian battles.<sup>110</sup> Despite deciding to fight eight days later, Narses prepares to engage the Goths the very next day, suspecting treachery.<sup>111</sup> As it turns out, his suspicions are correct, and after the two armies have lined up, Procopius digresses to discuss a nearby hill, and its tactical function,<sup>112</sup> an issue – geography and grand tactics – that is in keeping with book 8 thus far, as we have seen.<sup>113</sup> There are other interesting features; the first phase of the battle itself alludes to the Battle of Thermopylae. Procopius notes that there is only one path that leads behind the hill;<sup>114</sup> having noted the 50-man Roman force sent to hold the hill, he notes that they arranged their phalanx as best they could given the limited space.<sup>115</sup> While arrayed in the densely packed formation the fifty men manage to hold their position and ward off a series of attacks from the Gothic cavalry.<sup>116</sup> These charges are quite vivid with Procopius alternating his focalization in rapid succession between the Romans, the Goths, and the Gothic horses, while also appealing to his readers' senses, particularly sight and sound, from the quick charge of the cavalry,<sup>117</sup> and thrusting of the spears<sup>118</sup> (in

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<sup>110</sup> This suggests that there may have been a ritualistic dimension to sixth century combat, a point worth further examination. The fact that this issue is not described in any of the earlier battle narratives does not mean that it was not discussed. Dara is instructive in this regard, for Procopius tells us about the arrangement of the two lines, then gives us the exhortations of the two commanders, followed by the battle itself (which started with a series of single combats). In other words, there is no suggestion in his description that one side surprised the other, save for the later arrival of Persian reinforcements. There is another interesting element of this feature, namely the inclusion of a mini-dialogue in direct discourse between the respective envoys. With the exception of the case at the end of the *Gothic Wars* (6.6.21ff.), and the speeches (which I think are something else entirely) found throughout the *Wars*, dialogues are largely absent, though there are a number of episodes in which we know discussion took place, such as the three-way conversation between Frankish, Gothic, and Roman envoys at 6.28.10. In those instances, however, the discussion is usually related by Procopius the narrator in indirect discourse.

<sup>111</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.29.9.

<sup>112</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.29.11-13. Thucydides also devotes considerable attention to the role of the hill, Epipolae, at Syracuse, in book 6 (6.96ff.) of his *Histories*.

<sup>113</sup> Procopius' subsequent comments about the spring also follow this book 8 pattern (8.29.15).

<sup>114</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.29.11.

<sup>115</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.29.15.

<sup>116</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.29.16-21.

<sup>117</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.29.18.

<sup>118</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.29.18.

language evocative of the Classical Greek phalanx, particularly the *othismos*),<sup>119</sup> to the shouting of the men<sup>120</sup> and crashing of the shields.<sup>121</sup> This is followed by a minor *analepsis*, as Procopius singles out the bravery of two of the Roman combatants, namely a certain Paulos, and a certain Ansilas;<sup>122</sup> here we are reminded of the individual bravery of Homeric warriors. In this episode Procopius says that the two men jumped in front of the phalanx, threw down their swords, and started shooting arrows at their foes, “making an especially notable display of *arête* beyond all others”.<sup>123</sup> What is notable for us is the fact that it is their skill at archery that attracts Procopius’ attention: this evokes his Homeric archer/Roman archer dichotomy from the preface, and the comments and descriptions scattered throughout the *Gothic Wars*, which emphasize the ability and effectiveness of the Roman bow against the Goths; it thereby contributes to the text’s overall unity, while also reflecting Procopius’ attempt to keep his description of this battle somewhat consistent with those of earlier Romano-Gothic battles. Procopius’ description of this episode implies that the principal reason that the Romans were able to hold off the charges of the Goths was the single-handed efforts of Paulos, and his ability to use whatever weapons he could find, including his body;<sup>124</sup> this last bit of the scene is focalized through him. As a result of his heroic actions, Narses rewards him by making him one of his personal guards.<sup>125</sup> This brings to an end this first, literary allusion infused, phase of the battle.

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<sup>119</sup> Rance 2005: 442; cf. Hanson (2000: 171-184) and Goldsworthy (1997) on the Greek *othismos*, and more recently Van Wees (2004: 188-191), Rawlings (2007: 52-58, 90-93), and Wheeler (2007: 209-211).

<sup>120</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.29.18.

<sup>121</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.29.18-19.

<sup>122</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.29.22. Cf. Rance 2005: 452.

<sup>123</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.29.22. Unlike Teucer in the *Iliad*, of course, these archers do not couch behind someone else’s shield for protection, in marked contrast to the Homeric archers, and another probable reference to Procopius’ archery discussion in the preface.

<sup>124</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.29.26-27.

<sup>125</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.29.28. Procopius’ description suggests that Narses was on hand paying attention to the actions of his soldiers, or at least was well-informed about them. Belisarius similarly rewarded soldiers for their bravery in battle (see above pp. 304-305) just as Alexander the Great had hundreds of years earlier. Indeed, this seems to be a fairly common leadership practice in antiquity, and would have been an effective way to

The second phase opens with two ominous exhortations, one given by Narses, the other by Totila, which serve as indirect means of characterization, and as narrative devices, on the one hand, highlighting some of the important points about battle stressed earlier in the *Wars*, and, on the other, pointing towards Busta Gallorum's probable outcome. These two speeches complement each other, as Procopian speeches are wont to do, while also bringing out the different character of the two generals and their forces. Indeed, where the respective speeches in the Battle of Dara, for example, not only interacted with each other, but also the surrounding text, Procopius constructed these two exhortations in such a way that they are perhaps more concerned with characterization than other narrative details per se.<sup>126</sup> Narses' opening lines betray a lot of confidence on the part of the Romans in their success, a fact born out by his suggestion that this particular exhortation is not, strictly speaking,

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promote loyalty and bravery on the field of battle. On the other hand, this scene also brings to mind this juxtaposition between prosaic unit order and individual bravery that has most often been discussed in the context of the earlier imperial army. As we saw, the scene opened with Procopius' careful description of the closely-packed arrangement of the Romans, a formation for which success is based on good discipline. The fact that they held off successive Gothic cavalry charges shows that they did possess this discipline; indeed, in the attacks of heavy cavalry this is the best formation to employ, a point well known in antiquity, and made especially clear by Arrian in his *Ektaxis* (on which see Wheeler 1979). Thus, in this battle we also have this manifest juxtaposition between discipline and individual bravery. Yet, this does not mean that Procopius' account is contradictory, or that this battle marks an exception to the rule. As regards the individual attacks by Paulos and Asinas, if we are to believe Procopius' description then it seems that the practice had differed little in the ensuing 300 years or so (from the Principate), thus possibly offering more proof that the charges of laxity often given to the late Roman army need to be reconsidered. Much of the earlier imperial army's success rested on the ability of the commanders to use disciplined and complex tactical formations when necessary, while not sacrificing the *virtus* of the individual soldiers, a balance not easy to strike (a point born out recently by Phang 2008). Indeed, this juxtaposition between laxity (at least on its surface) and discipline has become an object of much interest in recent years in Roman military studies, though it has, for the most part, bypassed analyses of the late Roman army. See, for example, Lendon (2005: 163-315), Southern (2007: 145-149), and Phang (2008) for the earlier imperial army, and, Jones (1964: 668-679), Southern and Dixon (1996: 170-174), Rance (2007a: 371-378), and Whately (2008) for the later army.

<sup>126</sup> I would speculate that it is perhaps more evident here than elsewhere that Procopius aimed to construct these speeches in such a way that reflected the characters of the two generals, and the two armies, at this particular juncture in the narrative. In other words, he felt that these are the sorts of things that these two generals were likely to say given what had happened. I suggested as much for the Gothic commanders at Senogallia.

necessary.<sup>127</sup> He notes that they outmatch their opponents as regards *arête*, numbers, and equipment, and that all they really need is to get God on their side.<sup>128</sup> In fact, he goes so far as to suggest that the Goths would not have arrayed themselves against the Romans if they had considered the situation carefully.<sup>129</sup> Narses then claims that the Goths possess many of those qualities which, in Procopius' evaluation, tend to bring defeat to any side. These are irrational boldness, reckless madness, the inability to look ahead, and a failure to propitiate God.<sup>130</sup> All these factors together, then, should not necessarily convey a sense of foreboding if the opposing general, here Totila, is able to respond to and refute these charges. Totila, however, does not deny these allegations. To begin with, from the onset he characterizes his exhortation as the final one.<sup>131</sup> Totila notes that they have been stripped of all of their power, and that they have failed to get what they need, both points which refer to their inferior numbers and equipment as proclaimed by Narses.<sup>132</sup> He also spends most of his time doing whatever he can to embolden his men, who in his own eyes are suffering from a severe lack of courage,<sup>133</sup> a point made by Narses. Indeed, side by side, these two speeches point towards a Roman victory, and, quite probably, an end to the war in Italy.<sup>134</sup>

With the speeches concluded the next phase of the battle begins; here Procopius examines the generalship of the two sides. Where the first phase had brought out some intertextual relationships, this phase brings out some intratextual relationships. We also see some of the points stressed in the speeches reflected in the narrative. The deployment of the armies is noted, with

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<sup>127</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.30.1.

<sup>128</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.30.1-2. Maurice (*Strat.* pref. 45) also stresses the importance of God when heading into battle.

<sup>129</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.30.3.

<sup>130</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.30.4.

<sup>131</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.30.7.

<sup>132</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.30.9.

<sup>133</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.30.10-16.

<sup>134</sup> Of these two points, it is the latter that turns out not to be the case.



detail evinced of the sort not seen in a pitched battle since Procopius' description of Dara, at least as regards the Roman army. It also includes some narratorial comments about the tactical functions of specific parts of the Roman army's formations. Procopius is sparing in his description of the Goths' forces, and is more concerned with identifying Totila's continuing efforts to embolden his men by riding up and down the line giving words of encouragement.<sup>135</sup> This latter point reflects Totila's concerns with the lack of bravery of his men.<sup>136</sup> Narses does the same thing, though he also holds up torques and golden bridles,<sup>137</sup> a reflection of the relative prosperity of the two sides, and their psychological state. There follows a scene again reminiscent of Dara. A certain Gothic soldier named Kokkas, who had originally been a Roman soldier, rides out and challenges any of the Romans to single combat.<sup>138</sup> The challenge is accepted by one of Narses' spearmen, a certain Anzalas,<sup>139</sup> who like Andreas at Dara, is an Armenian. Anzalas is successful, to the applause of his comrades. As at Dara a more senior Gothic soldier decides to follow Kokkas, only here it is the most senior of them all, Totila; on the other hand he decides not to engage with a Roman soldier, but rather to make a display of his skill on a horse. Indeed, this manoeuvre is in part a delaying tactic in the hope that reinforcements will soon come to the Goths' aid.<sup>140</sup> Significantly, the series of single combats at Dara is soon followed by the arrival of reinforcements, even though the number of Goths

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<sup>135</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.31.8.

<sup>136</sup> As is usually the case, Procopius' speeches do have some bearing on the text that follows, as here.

<sup>137</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.31.9. We are also reminded here of the reward given to Paulos for his bravery in the opening skirmish.

<sup>138</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.31.11.

<sup>139</sup> See Rance's (2005: 452, n. 107) comments about the possible need to conflate the characters of Ansilas and Anzalas, though I would be more willing to attribute this to coincidence rather than conflation. Presumably, a number of those men who served as Narses' spearmen got that position because of their personal bravery. Also, Andreas' bravery suggests that, at least in the eyes of Procopius, Armenians were particularly noteworthy for his trait. Thomson's, Howard-Johnston's, and Greenwood's (1999: xiii-xiv) and Walker's (2006: 158-160; 158, n. 158) comments on Sebeos and sixth and seventh century Armenia are illustrative in this regard.

<sup>140</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.31.17.

meant to arrive here at Busta Gallorum is much less than that of the Persians. Indeed, to no small degree, the Romans' opponent here is inferior to that at Dara, thus making the eventual victory of Narses much less significant than that of Belisarius. As with Bessas earlier, Procopius has put these two generals up for comparison by highlighting the relative similarities of the two battles, Busta Gallorum and Dara. Narses proves himself to be quite well prepared for the battle as Totila's attempt to outwit and surprise him fails miserably.<sup>141</sup> There follows a re-arrangement of the Roman forces to counter the increased strength of the Goths.<sup>142</sup> We also get Procopius' famous statement that Totila had told his men to use only their spears and not their bows or any other weapon,<sup>143</sup> this baffling decision and subsequent action, as Procopius himself readily admits,<sup>144</sup> is in stark contrast to that of the Romans whose choice of weapon hinged on the needs of the situation.<sup>145</sup> When the Goths do charge, they do so with the recklessness that Narses had earlier credited them with.<sup>146</sup> Conversely, the Romans themselves have the *arête* that Narses said that they have.<sup>147</sup> As the battle rages the Goths start to give way and soon turn into headlong flight. We even get an allusion to God's role in the victory.<sup>148</sup> In the rout the Romans slaughter their opponents without mercy, who are themselves shamed by their flight, which again gets back to their low psychological levels originally reported by Narses, and suggested by Totila's own actions. In the end what we are left

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<sup>141</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.31.21; 8.32.3.

<sup>142</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.32.5-6.

<sup>143</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.32.7-8. Totila might in part have hoped that the Goths would be able to defeat the Romans using their own strengths, the spear and the horse, in the process matching the heroism of Paulos and Ansilas who also decided to use only one weapon initially (the bow), presumably their best. He may also have been consciously trying to play up the Goths martial character. See Rance (2005: 465-469) for an historical, rather than historiographical, discussion of Totila's decision.

<sup>144</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.32.7.

<sup>145</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.32.7. What this difference between Narses' and Totila's motives here amounts to is an exaggeration of the tactical differences of the Romans and Goths noted by Procopius in the *Gothic Wars* (see above pp. 249-255), brought upon, in part, by the low psychological level of the Goths' themselves.

<sup>146</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.32.8.

<sup>147</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.32.12.

<sup>148</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.32.15.

with is a battle in which the winning general, Narses, did greatly outmatch his opponent, but in an engagement between sides that were never evenly matched. This description amounts not so much to unabashed praise of Narses' tactical brilliance so much as to the advantages that the Romans had when they eventually had the resources to match their ambitions.<sup>149</sup>

### **Mons Lactarius**

The last battle recorded in the *Wars* is the Battle of Mons Lactarius, and this brief description brings the text to a close.<sup>150</sup> In some ways this engagement makes a fitting concluding battle to the text, for it incorporates features of a pitched battle, a siege, and perhaps best of all, centres on the heroism, and ultimately the failure of, a general.<sup>151</sup> As with many book 8 battles, it opens with a description of the local geography.<sup>152</sup> The Goths attempt to fortify their position across the River Drakon with towers and ballista put in place.<sup>153</sup> At the onset of this battle the river serves as a barrier, so preventing the two sides from coming to blows, though the presence of the bridge does at least permit a series of single combats.<sup>154</sup> A bit later, after a successful operation, the Romans seize some Gothic ships and put up towers of their own on their side of the river.<sup>155</sup> The first stage lasts for a couple of months, before the Goths are forced to retreat to Mons

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<sup>149</sup> It is no coincidence that Procopius' brief eulogy of Totila (*Wars* 8.32.28-30) evokes the one he gave earlier about Belisarius, for which see above pp. 302-306. As with Belisarius, and many of the battles and commanders in the *Wars*, we get another example of the great reversal (*peripeteia*), a theme Procopius stresses throughout. The reader of the *Wars* is surely meant to draw parallels between Dara and Busta Gallorum, and so Belisarius and Narses. As with Bessas earlier in book 8, Belisarius comes across much the superior general, a point which questions Procopius' alleged loss of faith in the *strategos*.

<sup>150</sup> On the battle see Rubin (1957: 526-527) and Syväne (2004: 472). This battle parallels the Ephthalite/Persian battle at the start of the *Wars*.

<sup>151</sup> It should also be noted that in the first battle described in the *Wars*, between the Ephthalites and the Sasanid Iranians (on which see above pp. 126-127.), the main characters were also non-Romans, much as Teias is here.

<sup>152</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.35.1-8.

<sup>153</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.35.9.

<sup>154</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.35.17-18.

<sup>155</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.35.13-14.

Lactarius. Eventually they run out of provisions and decide to make one last desperate charge against the Romans, in the hopes of catching them off guard by its suddenness, a tactic that is often successful in Procopian battles.<sup>156</sup> A bit alarmingly at first for the Romans, they do not arrange themselves as they normally would for a battle, and they in fact seem quite disordered, though perhaps significantly, Procopius does not actually use such a word.<sup>157</sup> On the other hand, the Goths decide to dismount and fight on foot, a move which does not allow them to take advantage of a jumbled phalanx, but does enable their commander Teias to make displays of heroism. Indeed, much of the narrative is centred on the heroic exploits of this last Gothic commander of the *Wars*: “Here I shall write about a battle that was worthy of much repute, and, the *arête* of a man who I think is no more inferior than that of any one of the heroes of legend, particularly that display [of *arete*] which Teias made in this engagement.”<sup>158</sup> In this last battle, Procopius says that the Goths now had the courage which they so lacked at Busta Gallorum; when the fighting starts, Teias, the current Gothic general, is immediately emphasized.

As with some earlier battles, Teias, the primary character in this episode, stands out from the lot and soon draws the fire of the Romans.<sup>159</sup> Here too we see Procopius’ continuously stressed belief in the importance of the general in the outcome of a battle: “When the Romans saw him, thinking that if he himself should fall, the battle would instantly fall apart for them, all of those who lay claim to *arête* stood against him”.<sup>160</sup> This central phase of the battle is almost entirely focalized through Teias. In the narrative which follows the Gothic commander draws the attention of all of the Roman attackers; at the time the impression given is that he is the only Goth charging their opponents. Indeed, the sole

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<sup>156</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.35.17.

<sup>157</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.35.18.

<sup>158</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.35.20.

<sup>159</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.35.23.

<sup>160</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.35.23.

purpose of Teias' guardsmen seems to be to give him fresh shields once the others have been filled with spears.<sup>161</sup> In fact, we learn little about what else is transpiring in this battle until:

And he [the guard] was standing beside him with the shield, and Teias immediately exchanged the one weighed down with spears for this one. But, at the same time, his chest happened to be bare in this brief moment, and by chance, having been struck by a javelin, he then fell down and died from this direct hit.<sup>162</sup>

Teias' death, in a manner we would expect given Procopius' battles from the *Gothic Wars*, is followed by a rather gruesome scene, with some Roman soldiers holding his head aloft as a trophy in an attempt to embolden their comrades, and demoralize the Goths.<sup>163</sup> But, events transpire other than expected, as Procopius notes, for the Goths fight on.<sup>164</sup> In the remainder of the battle the action is described summarily, with events focalized through the respective sides as a whole. With the exception of Procopius' possible use of a Sophoclean word,<sup>165</sup> the fighting is unremarkable, insofar as Procopian descriptions are concerned. The battle itself comes across as something of a stalemate, until the Goths apparently perceive – finally in the sense Procopius conveys – that God is against them.<sup>166</sup> With that the *Wars* comes to a close, the final battle, significantly much like the first one, ultimately hinging on the death of a commander.

### Chapter Overview

Book 8 ends just like the *Iliad* ends, that is, with the death of the enemy leader. Despite attempts to maintain consistency with the rest of the *Wars*, that

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<sup>161</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.35.24-26.

<sup>162</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.35.29.

<sup>163</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.35.30.

<sup>164</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.35.31.

<sup>165</sup> The word, found at 8.35.32, is “ἀπηργιωμένοι”, which means “become wild/savage”. Significantly, Procopius uses the word to describe both sides, by some accounts a fitting way to describe the armies involved in the last battle of his history of war under Justinian.

<sup>166</sup> Procop. *Wars* 8.35.33.

is, by describing battles in particular theatres in a manner consistent with how they were described in the requisite part of the *Wars* – battles in the East as they had been in the *Persian Wars* – the techniques employed in the *Gothic Wars* are much more prominent. On the other hand, where Procopius opened the *Wars* with a comparison between contemporary and Homeric archers, he ends the *Wars* with matters unfinished, much as they had been at the end of the *Iliad*. In the *Iliad* we have the heroic, if pathetic, death of Hector; in the *Wars* Teias. From this perspective, then, and despite the uniquely literary character of this final book, Procopius still endeavours to highlight the unity of his text.

## Conclusion

Procopius is an historian who needs to be taken seriously as a writer as well as a source of information. As we have just seen, there is tremendous variety in his descriptions of battle: they are far from formulaic. Procopius deliberately varied his descriptions of battle to draw on a range of influences and to convey particular messages to explain military success. It is also clear that when reading the *Wars* we must be cognizant of the late antique context.

In the descriptions of battle Procopius engages with elements from the rhetorical handbooks, historiographical theorists, and military treatises. In some places he seems to be responding to many of the criticisms raised by the rhetorical and historiographical theorists. Thucydides' descriptions, as we saw, are often considered quite complicated, and one could argue that in response to this Procopius has generally gone for relative simplicity. Rhetorical and historiographical theorists also stressed the importance of putting events in a scene in their proper place, and as we have seen, Procopius is careful and deliberate in his arrangement and in the choice of events he describes: he sticks to the promises he made in the preface. This is partially evident in his decision to arrange the *Wars* by theatres, perhaps following Appian, which, for the most part, alleviated the problem of jumping around to describe concurrent events happening in different places.<sup>1</sup> I noted that many Greek historians were particularly concerned with the tactical conception of battle, with Polybius being the extreme example of this tendency. Procopius favours tactical explanations too, at least in the *Persian Wars*, though as the text progresses, particularly as we move into the *Vandal Wars* and *Gothic Wars*, morale, psychology,

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<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, this may have been necessitated by the nature of the chronology of the events described.

and stratagems become increasingly important. This emphasis on morale and psychology in some sense reflects the Roman conception of combat, which is perhaps to be expected given that Procopius and his fellow citizens of the Greek East saw themselves as Romans.

Much has been made of Procopius' relationships with classical Greek historians such as Herodotus and Thucydides, and rightly so, though points of contact with Homer have generally been overlooked. These same historiographical predecessors often engaged with Homer, whether it was in their prefaces or through the descriptions of particular episodes; as such, Procopius' engagement with "the poet" should not surprise. What should, and does, however, is the explicitness of this engagement; moreover, when he does so it is in the most fitting section and theatre. Procopius' choice to emphasize the Homeric character of Italy and the Italian war was deliberate. In Roman mythology, of course, some of the descendants of the defeated Trojans moved to Italy and founded the nation of the Romans. Like the Trojans and Achaeans before them, the Ostrogoth and East Roman armies are similarly composed, with heroic leaders and personal retinues. As in the *Iliad*, the war limps along without a clear-cut end in sight. Both wars also begin as the result of a woman, and both texts, the *Wars* and the *Iliad* end with the death of a leader and the war unresolved. Whether considering rhetoric, military theory, or Homer, it is clear that there were a variety of different literary traditions which influenced Procopius.

Procopius' blurring of the tactics/morale dichotomy is unsurprising given the changes in the tactical and strategic situation of the East Roman Empire. This mixing of tactics and morale was also evident in the descriptions of some of his contemporaries such as Agathias and Jordanes. The main difference between these contemporaries and Procopius is that with Procopius there is much more depth,



variety, and artistry in his battles. Besides this trait, another feature which Procopius had in common with his fellow sixth-century historians was the nature of some of the explanations he gave. Although I focused on battles and sieges alone, we saw that Procopius was no mere reporter, but an historian who sought to explain why the battles he described turned out in the ways that they did. Not only does he provide a wide variety of descriptions, but their character, and explanations, vary depending upon the context. In some cases he explains the outcomes in terms of generalship, some tactics, and in other battles Procopius has recourse to give divine explanations. This latter point is evident throughout, though most so in the *Persian Wars* and the *Vandal Wars*. Again, like the attention to both tactics and morale, Procopius shared this with his contemporaries. The Roman world in the sixth century was largely Christianized, and these sorts of explanations support claims that Procopius himself was a Christian. His Byzantine successors would adopt these practices, though not from Procopius of course. Indeed, while accepting that middle Byzantine historians may have developed from chronicles than from Procopius' immediate successors such as Agathias and Theophylact Simocatta, there were other features of his text besides Christian explanations that anticipate the tendencies of later historians, such as his focus on the events of the reign of a single emperor. On the other hand, as I alluded to above with the discussion of influences, he is still in many ways very classical. In this sense he is the embodiment of the late antique author and historian, straddling as he does two worlds, the ancient and the medieval (here Byzantine).

Bearing in mind Procopius' varied influences and the commonalities with his contemporaries, it is worth asking who Procopius' intended audience was.<sup>2</sup> A number of different answers have been put forth. Some have postulated something

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Jeffreys 2006.

of a literary elite,<sup>3</sup> some closet Platonist philosophers (at least in part),<sup>4</sup> some the generals and civilian elite,<sup>5</sup> while others a more general group of elite.<sup>6</sup> As we saw, the costs involved with a sixth century education were significant, particularly to reach the level to read and write in the language that Procopius did. Thus, on one level we could say that Procopius' audience included the wealthy elite. These wealthy elites would have had a similar education, and so Procopius' choice to write in a style similar to that of the standard texts like Herodotus and Thucydides was largely contingent on his desire to set events in a language, framework, and with systems of meaning which his audience could understand. Furthermore, the fact that his text was successful suggests that it had a relatively large audience. Might some of them been from the officer class? This is a more difficult proposition to confirm. If Latin was still widely spoken and since many of the generals were of Balkan origin, then they may not have been able to read the *Wars*. What can we say about his audience's tastes? Well, war was evidently still popular, perhaps even more so than it had been in earlier periods, and I would suggest that the interests of the elite, at least partially, leaned towards military matters. Justinian was keen to promote success in war, more so than most emperors before him had for quite some time.<sup>7</sup> It is no surprise then that a military career was a viable option for the elite, as volume three of the *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, which admittedly is not without its problems, suggests.<sup>8</sup> There seems to have been an interpenetration

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<sup>3</sup> Rapp 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Kaldellis 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Rance 2005.

<sup>6</sup> Brodka 2007.

<sup>7</sup> McCormick 1986: 67

<sup>8</sup> I went through volume 3 of *the Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* and identified those persons who dated to the sixth century. There are 953 total entries (in reality probably fewer individuals existed than total entries, and I should note that this list contains 3 of the 6 emperors who ruled in the sixth century) in Martindale (1992). Roughly 1/3 of the total are elite soldiers (301). Of this group of officers, 53 are of the grade *spectabilis*, with the rest

of secular and military hierarchies. Indeed, there are signs that the military was playing an increasingly important role in public and private life in the sixth century. This issue, and related topics on military matters, have not been given the attention that they deserve. Aspects of the army in society, the army in politics, and the army and culture merit serious study. War and culture is something for which there is a wealth of material in late antiquity, with the age of Justinian particularly well served. In this thesis I have only looked at one text, and rather cursorily at the Graeco-Roman tradition, so ignoring texts written in Syriac, Armenian, and Coptic. What is more, given my emphasis on literary issues, this sort of analysis could, and should, be extended to the late sixth and seventh centuries, with other genres, such as poetry, incorporated. There is also, of course, much more to be done on Procopius himself. A more detailed study of his knowledge of warfare is needed, and unlike this thesis, more attention ought to be paid to the reality, and less the rhetoric, though the relationship between the two certainly should not be overlooked.

In the end, it is clear just how important an historian Procopius is. He deserves a wider modern audience, and one that not only has a passing interest in the sex and intrigue of the *Secret History*. Procopius is one of antiquity's most important historians, and the fact that he is such a crucial source for the age of Justinian should be applauded and not bemoaned. When careful attention is paid to his style, intellectual milieu, rhetoric, and intratextual context, an examination of something often considered as uninspired and banal as the description of a battle or siege can be tremendously insightful and rewarding.

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*illustris*, that is, more than 8/10. As regards the civilians, 81 are of the *spectabilis* grade (total civilians 653), with the rest *illustris* (572), that is, a little less than 9/10. The low number of those of *spectabilis* grade is probably due to the fact that over the course of late antiquity the title gradually lost its lustre (Jones 1964: 529). Overall, more than 2/5 (248/572) of those of the grade *illustris* are soldiers.

## **Appendix 1: Battle in Antiquity – Rhetoric and Reality**

My focus over the course of this thesis has been on the rhetoric employed by Procopius to describe battles in the *Wars* and I have consciously avoided discussing its relationship with reality. Now that I have elucidated his narrative practices I want to make some comments about the correlation between that rhetoric and reality.<sup>1</sup>

Historians have a host of material available to them to use when attempting to reconstruct an ancient battle, and/or the tactics, conditions, and experience found in one.<sup>2</sup> The material evidence has been used with some profit. Dura-Europos has provided valuable evidence for siege warfare in the third century, particularly the remains of Roman soldiers and an ancient mine.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, an archaeological study of the battlefield of Dara has enabled Lillington-Martin to postulate a new theory on the location, and to a lesser degree certain elements of the course, of the Battle of Dara described by Procopius, which I looked at in chapter three above.<sup>4</sup> What, to this point, archaeology has not been able to do is provide chronological markers, as the evidence uncovered cannot be dated with the certainty needed to reconstruct events; like the literature, the material evidence is not shorn of bias. Another possibility is the use of comparative evidence from contemporary models,<sup>5</sup> whether how to describe a battle and its experience using modern

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Lynn's (2003: xix-xxii) discussion of the relationship between discourse and reality, as he conceives it, in his history of battle and culture, and Ravegnani's (2004: 144-174) discussion of the theory and practice of warfare in the sixth century, using military manuals and the historical and poetic literature.

<sup>2</sup> The classic account of this matter is Whatley (1964), which has now been superseded by Whitby (2007a). Cf. Sabin 2007: 3-15.

<sup>3</sup> Lee 2007a: 130-133.

<sup>4</sup> Lillington-Martin 2007.

<sup>5</sup> War-gaming has also been used to reconstruct ancient battles, as have re-enactment societies. Cf. Sabin 2007.

theoretical approaches, such as the “face of battle”,<sup>6</sup> or through the use of comparative anthropological material to explain the nature of warfare.<sup>7</sup> A cultural approach to battle, which has had a major influence on this thesis, has also become popular of late, particularly with regard to battle.<sup>8</sup> The foundation for many of these approaches, however, is the ancient literature itself.

When attempting to reconstruct, and analyse, the practice of ancient battle and warfare, whether regarding the experience of the combatants, the generals, the course and chronology of a particular battle, or the tactics used by an ancient army, it is the literature that provides the most detail. Two principal and related issues are their usefulness and applicability. Asclepiodotus provides a wealth of information on the workings of the phalanx, including a host of technical terms; on the other hand, as far as we know, the man was an armchair theoretician and so we do not know whether his description was fanciful or otherwise. Livy gives a very detailed account of the Second Punic War, yet it took place nearly two hundred years before him, and he himself had seen little military action. Polybius, on whom much of Livy’s account is based, was closest to the events concerned by perhaps a generation at best; moreover, he himself saw action in the middle of the second century (BC). If we have more than one account, as we do for the Siege of Amida in 503, then we can compare the respective descriptions and extrapolate a core of historical data. When we have only one source for a particular battle, as we do for much of what Procopius describes, the situation is a bit more complex. This brings us back to the relationship

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<sup>6</sup> Keegan (1976), of course, is the inspiration for the “face of battle” approaches. As regards ancient history he has been followed, in varying degrees, by Goldsworthy (1996), Lee (1996), Hanson (2000), Sabin (2000), Daly (2002), and Lenski (2007). This approach has, however, drawn fire, particularly from Wheeler (1998, 2001), largely because of the perceived limitations which the evidence provides, and its interpretation, as well as by, more recently, Kagan (2006: 7-22), who questions its utility for analysing the varying aspects of battle.

<sup>7</sup> Van Wees 1994, 1997, 2004: 153-165. cf. James 2002: 28-29; Trombley 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Keegan 1993; Lendon 1999, 2005; Lynn 2003; Brizzi 2004; Phang 2008.

between Procopius' rhetoric and reality. The fact that we can check Procopius' account against those of other contemporary sources points towards his veracity for those where he is the only source. Plus, in keeping with the Greek historiographical tradition, one of his expressed aims was to stick to the truth, and there is little reason to question his statements on such matters.<sup>9</sup> I have attempted to show that Procopius went to considerable lengths to shape his descriptions, from varying the chronological order, to focusing, often exclusively, on generalship and heroism. In chapter 6 on book 8, the most literary book of the *Wars*, I even suggested that the battles of Busta Gallorum and Mons Lactarius were modelled on the Ephthalite/Persian battle and Dara from book 1. So, does this mean that Procopius has wilfully lied to his audience, and that we cannot get past his rhetoric of combat to uncover any reality? No, for as I noted in regard to the Siege of Amida, we can check the authenticity of certain events. Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, Pseudo-Zachariah, and Procopius all mention the use of mines to destabilize Kavad's mound.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, both Pseudo-Zachariah and Pseudo-Joshua highlight the death of the bishop during the siege, while Procopius omits it. Based on what we know from other elements of this siege, however, we should attribute Procopius' silence on these matters to a difference in emphasis.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, as I have tried to show, at least on the field of battle, Procopius presents a balanced picture of those individuals he knew best,<sup>12</sup> particularly Belisarius, though he does, at times, magnify his exploits.<sup>13</sup> That does not, however, mean that they are wrong.<sup>14</sup> As regards the

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<sup>9</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.1.4.

<sup>10</sup> Zach. *Hist. eccl.* 7.3 (153); Ps.-Joshua Stylites 50; Procop. *Wars* 1.7.14. cf. Greatrex 1998: 85-86.

<sup>11</sup> Debié 2004.

<sup>12</sup> Procop. *Wars* 1.1.5.

<sup>13</sup> Procopius, in his much maligned description of the Battle of Callinicum, actually includes explicit criticism of the general, a point which Evagrius (4.13) picked up on. Belisarius is described in heroic terms in the *Gothic Wars*, though his failings during his second expedition

reconstruction of tactics and combat it is again a question of selectivity rather than deception; he focuses on archery because of contemporary questions surrounding their effectiveness which he strives to address. In sum, the mass of rhetoric deployed by Procopius does not negate the presence of the identifiable reality found in the *Wars*, it merely shapes it.

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to Italy draw censure. On the other hand, in book 8 Procopius includes tacit criticism of Bessas and Narses, so suggesting that his opinion of the general was fairly consistent throughout the *Wars*.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Lynn 2003: xx.

## **Appendix 2: Procopius, Belisarius, and Roman Defeat at the Battle of Callinicum**

Different accounts of Belisarius' role in this battle are given by two contemporaries, namely Pseudo-Zachariah and Malalas.<sup>1</sup> According to Pseudo-Zachariah, the reason for Belisarius' unwillingness to engage the Persians at Callinicum had been his piety, and his respect for the Persian commander's wishes that the two sides not fight during the Easter fast. The pious Belisarius consents but as in Procopius' account he is rebuked by his unholy troops. The two engage, the Persians win, and Belisarius manages to escape. Pseudo-Zachariah's account does not cast any blame on Belisarius for the outcome, and instead stresses that he had been willing to honour the fast. If anything, it is the Roman soldiers who are to blame.

Malalas' account is fairly hostile towards Belisarius. Interestingly enough, however, we find some of the same concerns raised repeatedly by Procopius in the *Persian Wars*: there was discord among the various Roman forces leading up to the Battle of Callinicum. In Malalas' account Belisarius seems to let his anger get the better of him and so he enters the fray perhaps still a little infuriated with Sunicas. There is no mention of the unwillingness of any of the soldiers to fight beforehand. Once the battle begins and it starts to go in the Persians' favour Belisarius takes his standard and flees. As a result of the Roman defeat a commission is launched and Belisarius is found guilty of cowardice and dismissed from his command. Needless to say, much like Greatrex, I am not so sure that Malalas' official record of events is

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<sup>1</sup> Zach. *Hist. eccl.* 9.4; Malalas 18.60.



necessarily the one to be preferred.<sup>2</sup> Although it is one of Malalas' longest descriptions of battle he has certainly left out a considerable amount of detail.

Both Malalas and Procopius, unlike Pseudo-Zachariah, find some reason to censure Belisarius' actions, explicitly in the case of Malalas, implicitly in the case of Procopius. Thus, if we accept that in the historical battle Belisarius was in some way responsible for the outcome, what is then significant is how the respective authors construct their narratives to emphasize their different interpretations of the battle. Pseudo-Zachariah's and Procopius' accounts both suggest an initial unwillingness on Belisarius' part to engage his foes; thus there is no reason to deny that this actually happened. All three authors state at some point that Belisarius turned and withdrew from battle; but, the significant difference is that only Procopius adds some detail in between the shift in momentum following the Persians' breaking of Arethas' line. Pseudo-Zachariah and Malalas omit the struggle that preceded Belisarius' withdrawal.

In the end the Battle of Callinicum shows us just how suitable battles are for analyses of narrative techniques employed by writers of diverse backgrounds and working in different genres. The incredible complexity of a battle forces any would-be writer to be selective: it is impossible to record all events which occur over the course of a battle.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Greatrex 1998: 194-195).

<sup>3</sup> See above pp. 99-106 for a discussion of Malalas' military narratives and Kagan (2006: 1-22) for the problems inherent in narrating battles with reference to their complexity.

### Appendix 3: Numbers Used in the Gothic Wars

The following complete list includes those troop numbers used by Procopius in the *Gothic Wars*, which I use in section II, chapter 5, to discuss numbers and characterization.<sup>1</sup>

5.5.2	<b>Roman forces</b>	4,000 soldiers from the foederati, around 3,000 from the Isaurians	Troops deployed at start of war
5.5.4	<b>Roman forces</b>	200 allied Huns, 300 Moors	Troops deployed
5.6.2	<i>Gothic forces</i>	3,000 Gothic warlike men	Part of possible treaty
5.7.34	<b>Roman forces</b>	500 men from the army	Troops deployed
5.10.1	<b>Roman forces</b>	Selecting around 400 men	Troops deployed
5.10.3	<b>Roman forces</b>	The 400 men	Troops deployed
5.10.8	<b>Roman forces</b>	200 of the men around him	Troops deployed
5.10.37	<i>Gothic forces</i>	No less than 800 Goths were captured	P.O.W.
5.11.26	<i>Gothic forces</i>	No less than 4,000 men	Troops deployed
5.12.51	<i>Gothic forces</i>	Around 2,000 soldiers	Troops deployed
5.14.1	<b>Roman forces</b>	300 men from an infantry division	Troops deployed
5.16.11	<i>Gothic forces</i>	Cavalry and infantry numbering <b><i>no less than 150,000</i></b>	Troops deployed
5.17.17	<i>Gothic forces</i>	22 deserters came to them, barbarian by nation, but Roman soldiers	Roman deserters
5.17.17	<b>Roman forces</b>	1,000 horsemen	Troops deployed
5.18.14	<i>Gothic forces</i>	no less than 1,000 Goths	Casualties
5.22.17	<b>Roman forces</b>	amounted to about 5,000	Troops deployed
5.23.26	<i>Gothic forces</i>	<b>30,000</b> of the Goths	Casualties
5.24.2	<b>Roman forces, Gothic forces</b>	although the army has been reduced to 5,000 men. But the enemy, having	Troops deployed

<sup>1</sup> See chapter 5 above p. 269ff. This list is meant to be a complete record of the troop numbers used by Procopius, though it is entirely possible that I may have missed some cases unintentionally.

		gathered <b>150,000</b> men	
5. 26.19	<b>Roman forces</b>	1,600 military horsemen	Troops deployed
5.27.6	<b>Roman forces</b>	with the 200 men	Troops deployed
5.27.11	<i>Gothic forces</i>	no less than 1,000 Goths	Casualties
5.27.11	<b>Roman forces</b>	with 300 guardsmen	Troops deployed
5.27.13	<b>Roman forces</b>	with 300 horsemen	Troops deployed
5.27.16	<i>Gothic forces</i>	500 horsemen	Troops deployed
5.27.18	<b>Roman forces</b>	selected 1,000 men	Troops deployed
5.27.22	<b>Roman forces</b>	1,500 troops	Troops deployed
5.29.44	<b>Roman forces</b>	hacked to pieces, fell there, along with 42 infantrymen	Casualties
<b>6.2.9</b>	<b>Roman forces</b>	600 horsemen	Troops deployed
6.3.7	<i>Gothic forces</i>	no less than around 7,000 men	Troops deployed
6.4.6	<b>Roman forces</b>	With 1,000 men	Troops deployed
6.4.7	<b>Roman forces</b>	with around 500 men	Troops deployed
6.4.19	<b>Roman forces</b>	no less than 500 soldiers	Troops deployed
6.5.1	<b>Roman forces</b>	with around 3,000 Isaurians...and 800 horsemen...and with them 1,000 other soldiers from a division of horsemen	Troops deployed
6.5.2	<b>Roman forces</b>	with 300 horsemen arrived...they were mixed with 500 men who had been collected	Troops deployed
6.7.3	<b>Roman forces</b>	with 100 horsemen	Troops deployed
6.10.1	<b>Roman forces</b>	with 2,000 horsemen	Troops deployed
6.11.1	<i>Gothic forces</i>	1,000 men...and such a number	Troops deployed
6.11.2	<i>Gothic forces</i>	500 men in the garrison of...he left behind 4,000 Goths...2,000 men in the city of	Troops deployed
6.11.3	<i>Gothic forces</i>	no less than 500 men	Troops deployed
6.11.4	<b>Roman forces</b>	with 1,000 horsemen	Troops deployed
6.11.22	<b>Roman forces</b>	with the 400	Troops deployed
6.12.26	<b>Roman forces</b>	1,000 Isaurians and Thracians	Troops deployed
6.12.40	<b>Roman forces</b>	with around 300 men	Troops deployed
6.13.17	<b>Roman forces</b>	5,000 soldiers followed with him	Troops deployed
6.13.18	<b>Roman forces</b>	around 2,000 men from the Herulian nation	Troops deployed

6.16.18	<b>Roman forces</b>	there with 1,000 men	Troops deployed
6.18.6	<b>Roman forces</b>	Heruls and spearmen and his guards...along with those with...and the followers of...he asserted were <b>no less than 10,000</b> men	Troops deployed
6.20.21	General Populace	<b>no less than 50,000</b> people	Casualties
6.21.39	General Populace	totalling <b>no less than 300,000</b>	Casualties
6.23.2	<b>Roman forces</b>	along with 500 foot-soldiers from a division	Troops deployed
6.23.5	<b>Roman forces</b>	<b>with 11,000</b> men	Troops deployed
6.25.2	Frankish forces	<b>100,000</b> men	Troops deployed
6.27.16	<b>Roman forces</b>	7 Armenian men who were deployed	Troops deployed
6.28.10	German/Frankish forces	our army of <b>no less than 500,000</b> warlike men	Troops deployed
6.28.31	<i>Gothic forces</i>	4,000 Ligurians and men from the fortresses in the Alps	Troops deployed
<b>7.1.27</b>	<i>Gothic forces</i>	no more than 1,000 men following him	Troops deployed
7.3.4	<b>Roman forces</b>	army of Romans numbering <b>12,000</b> was gathered	Troops deployed
7.4.12	<i>Gothic forces</i> , <b>Roman forces</b>	for going from <b>200,000</b> men to 5,000...the number that you happened to live with was no more than 1,000	Troops deployed
7.4.19	<i>Gothic forces</i>	300 of his followers	Troops deployed
7.10.3	<b>Roman forces</b>	having collected 4,000 men	Troops deployed
7.10.11	<b>Roman forces</b>	170	Casualties
7.11.19	<b>Roman forces</b>	3 of his spearmen...with 1,000 men	Troops deployed
7.11.28	<i>Gothic forces</i>	2,000 men	Troops deployed
7.11.30	<i>Gothic forces</i>	200 of them	Casualties
7.15.3	<b>Roman forces</b>	with 500 men	Troops deployed
7.18.29	<i>Gothic forces</i>	they were 300	Troops deployed
7.19.19	<i>Gothic forces</i>	all of the Goths, who numbered around 200	Casualties
7.19.25	<b>Roman forces</b>	100 horsemen	Troops deployed
7.20.19	General Populace	500 men	Men remaining

7.20.23	<b>General Populace, Roman forces</b>	26 of the soldiers died, as well as 60 members of the public	Casualties
7.21.4	<i>Gothic forces</i> , <b>Roman forces</b>	earlier we had collected <b>200,000</b> of the most warlike soldiers...we were defeated at the hands of 7,000 Greek men	Troops deployed
7.21.5	<b>Roman forces</b>	<b>more than 20,000</b> men from the enemy	Troops deployed
7.22.3	<b>Roman forces</b>	300 Antae	Troops deployed
7.22.21	<b>Roman forces</b>	the 300 Antae	Troops deployed
7.23.7	<b>Roman forces</b>	he came with an army...with the 15 soldiers	Troops deployed
7.23.8	<b>Roman forces</b>	1,000 of the soldiers	Troops deployed
7.23.18	<i>Gothic forces</i>	a garrison that numbered no less than 400 men	Troops deployed
7.26.6	<i>Gothic forces</i>	the army...and these same 400 barbarians	Troops deployed
7.26.10	<i>Gothic forces</i>	no less than 70 Roman soldiers	Roman deserters
7.26.16	<b>Roman forces</b>	with those under him numbered 1,000	Troops deployed
7.27.3	<b>Roman forces</b>	300 Heruls...with 800 Armenians...and guards who numbered no more than 1,000	Troops deployed
7.27.9	<b>Roman forces</b>	more than 200	Casualties
7.27.15	<b>Roman forces</b>	300 of his followers	Troops deployed
7.27.16	<b>Roman forces</b>	gathered 900 valorous men, 700 horsemen, 200 foot-soldiers	Troops deployed
7.28.10	<i>Gothic forces</i>	more than 200	Casualties
7.28.13	<i>Gothic forces</i>	3,000 horsemen from his entire expeditionary force	Troops deployed
7.29.3	<b>Roman forces?</b>	commanders of the Illyrians having an army of <b>15,000</b>	Troops deployed
7.30.1	<b>Roman forces</b>	no less than 2,000 foot-soldiers	Troops deployed
7.30.6	<b>Roman forces</b>	army of the Romans was 300 Illyrian horsemen...100 foot-soldiers	Troops deployed
7.30.18	<b>Roman forces</b>	2,000 horsemen from the expeditionary force	Troops deployed

7.30.23	<b>Roman forces</b>	80 men from the army of Romans	Troops deployed
7.34.40	<b>Roman forces (sent to Lombards)</b>	<b>more than 10,000</b> horsemen	Troops deployed
7.34.42	<b>Roman forces</b>	1,500 allied Heruls followed them	Troops deployed
7.34.43	<b>Roman forces</b>	Heruls amounted to 3,000	Troops deployed
7.35.21-22	<i>Gothic forces</i>	the followers and some volunteers from the Gepids...having an army of no less than 6,000 with him	Troops deployed
7.36.1	<b>Roman forces</b>	select 3,000 valorous men	Troops deployed
7.36.17	<b>Roman forces</b>	with 400 horsemen	Troops deployed
7.36.28	<b>Roman forces</b>	being 300 in number	Troops deployed
7.38.1	Slavic forces	an army of Sklaveni numbering no more than 3,000	Troops deployed
7.38.18	General Populace	all <b>15,000</b> men	Casualties
7.39.20	Lombard forces (sent to Romans)	1,000 heavily-armed men	Troops deployed

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**Abbreviations:** The abbreviations used in the thesis for ancient authors and journal articles are those found in the third edition of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Hornblower, S. and A. Spawforth, eds., 1996), the second volume of the *Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare* (Sabin, Van Wees, and Whitby 2007b.), and *l'Année Philologique*. For classical authors I have usually used the edition found in the *Loeb Classical Library* (LCL).

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<sup>1</sup> Every work cited in the thesis has been included in this bibliography.

<sup>2</sup> In the section 'primary sources' I have only included the edition/s and translation which were consulted. Where an edition and/or translation includes significant discussion by the editor and/or translator her/himself of the ancient author and his text, and in the process has been referred to in the respective chapters, such as Whitby's translation of Evagrius, I have included it under the section 'secondary sources'.

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